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THE

INFIRMITIES OF GENIUS

ILLUSTRATED

BY REFERRING THE ANOMALIES IN

THE LITERARY CHARACTER,

TO THE

HABITS AND CONSTITUTIONAL PECULIARITIES

OF

MEN OF GENIUS.

BY

R. R. MADDEN, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN TURKEY," &c.

Qui ratione corporis non habent, sed cogunt mortalem immortali, terrestrem ætheræ equalem prestare industriam.

PLUTARCH, DE SANIT. TUEND.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY, LEA, AND BLANCHARD.

1833.

JOHN BIORN, PRINTER—PHILADELPHIA.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

1833.

THE EARL OF CHARLEVILLE,

WHOSE TASTE FOR LITERATURE

AND

ACQUAINTANCE WITH ALL SUBJECTS

CONNECTED WITH THE HISTORY OF THE

VOTARIES AND VICTIMS OF LITERARY PURSUITS,

TIME HAS NOT IMPAIRED,

NOR PLEASURE INTERRUPTED,

THIS ATTEMPT

TO ILLUSTRATE

THE CHARACTER OF MEN OF GENIUS,

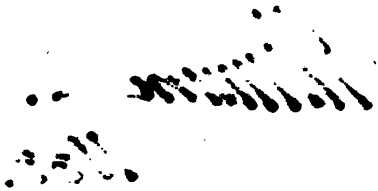
IS DEDICATED

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST RESPECTFUL AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

May, 1833.



THE

INFIRMITIES OF GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EFFECTS OF LITERARY HABITS.

It is generally admitted that literary men are an irritable race, subject to many infirmities, both of mind and body; that worldly prosperity and domestic happiness are not very often the result of their pursuits.

Eccentricity is the "badge of all their tribe;" and so many errors accompany their career, that fame and frailty would almost seem to be inseparable companions. Perhaps it is wisely ordained that such should be the case, to check the pride of human intellect, and to render those of humbler capacities contented with their lot, to whom nature has denied the noblest of her gifts.

It is the unfortunate tendency of literary habits, to enamour the studious of the seclusion of the closet, and to render them more conversant with

the philosophy and erudition of bye-gone times, than with the sentiments and feelings of their fellow-men. Their knowledge of the world is, in a great measure, derived from books, not from an acquaintance with its active duties; and the consequence is, that when they venture into its busy haunts, they bring with them a spirit of uncompromising independence, which arrays itself at once against every prejudice they have to encounter: such a spirit is but ill calculated to disarm the hostility of any casual opponent, or in the circle where it is exhibited "to buy golden opinions" of any "sorts of people." If the felicitous example of the poet of the drawing room seduce them into the haunts of fashionable life, they find themselves still less in their element; the effort to support the dignity of genius in a common-place conversation, costs them, perhaps, more fatigue than the composition of half a volume would occasion in their study. Or if any congenial topic engage attention, they may have the good sense to subdue their ardour, and endeavour to assume an awkward air of fashionable nonchalance; they may attempt to be agreeable, they may seem to be at ease, but they are on the stilts of literary abstraction all the time, and they cannot bow them down to kiss the crimson robe of good society with graceful homage. But these

are the minor inconveniences that arise from long indulgence in literary habits; the graver ones are those that arise from impartial health and depressed spirits, the inevitable consequences of excessive mental application. Waywardness of temper, testiness of humour and capriciousness of conduct, result from this depression; and under such circumstances the errors of genius are estimated too often by their immediate consequences, without any reference to predisposing causes. The fact is, the carriage of genius is unlikely to conciliate strangers, while its foibles are calculated to weary even friends, and its very glory to make bitter rivals of its contemporaries and comrades.

Accordingly we find that its ashes are hardly cold, before its frailties are raked up from the tomb, and baited at the ring of biography, till the public taste is satiated with the sport. It is only when its competitors are gathered to their fathers, and the ephemeral details of trivial feuds, of petty foibles, and private scandal, are buried with their authors, that the conduct of genius begins to be understood, and its character to be fairly represented.

The luminary itself at last engages that attention which had previously been occupied with the specks upon its disc. It was nearly a quarter of

a century before "the malignant principles of Milton" gave the world sufficient time to ascertain there was such a poem in existence as Paradise Lost. Only three thousand copies of it were sold in eleven years, while eight thousand copies of a modern novel have been disposed of in as many days; but we need not go back to the age of Milton for evidence of the tardy justice that is done to genius. Ten years ago the indiscretions of Shelly had rendered his name an unmentionable one to ears polite; but there is a reaction in public opinion, and whatever were his follies, his virtues are beginning to be known, and his poetry to be justly appreciated. It unfortunately happens that those who are disqualified by the limits of their capacities for the higher walks of learning, are those who take upon them the arduous duties of the literary Rhadamanthus, and at whose hands the "masters of the world" generally receive the roughest treatment. The competency of such a tribunal, however, must not be questioned, even when a Byron is at its bar: genius has not the privilege of being judged by its peers, for the difficulty would be too great of impannelling a jury of its fellows.

But how few of those who fasten on the infirmities of great talent, for the purpose of knawing

away its fame, like those northern insects that prey

"On the brains of the elk till his very last sigh;"

how very few who track the errors of genius to the tomb, take into consideration, or are capable of estimating the influence on the physical and moral constitution of studious habits inordinately pursued, of mental exertion long continued, of bodily exercise perhaps wholly neglected! How little do they know of the morbid sensibility of genius, who mistake its gloom for dreary misanthropy; or the distempered visions of "a heat oppressed brain," for impersonated opinions; or the shadows of a sickly dream, for the real sentiments of the heart! How few of the fatal friends who violate the sanctity of private life to minister to the prevailing appetite for literary gossip, ever think of referring the imperfections they drag into public notice, (yet fail not to deplore,) to a temperament deranged by ill-regulated, or excessive mental application, or of attributing "the variable weather of the mind, which clouds without obscuring the reason" of the individual, to the influence of those habits which are so unfavorable to health! Suicide might, indeed, have well had its horrors for that bard, who was even a more

sensitive man than "the melancholy Cowley," when he was informed that one of his best-natured friends was only waiting for the opportunity to write his life. But how devoutly might he have wished that "nature's copy in him had been eterne," had he known how many claims were shortly to be preferred to the property of his memory, and how many of those who had crawled into his confidence were to immortalize his errors, and to make his imperfections so many pegs for disquisition on perverted talents.

Of all persons who sacrifice their peace for the attainment of notoriety, literary men are most frequently made the subject of biography; but of all are they least fitted for that sort of microscopic biography which consists in the exhibition of the minute details of life. The Pythoness, we are told, was but a pitiable object when removed from the inspiration of the tripod, and the man of genius is, perhaps, no less divested of the attributes of his greatness when he is taken from his study, or followed in crowded circles. We naturally desire to know every thing that concerns the character or the general conduct of those whose productions have entertained or instructed us, and we gratify a laudable curiosity when we inquire into their history, and seek to illustrate their writings by the general tenor of their lives and actions.

But when biography is made the vehicle, not only of private scandal, but of that minor malignity of truth, which holds, as it were, a magnifying mirror to every naked imperfection of humanity, which possibly had never been discovered had no friendship been violated, no confidence been abused, and no errors exaggerated by the medium through which they have been viewed, it ceases to be a legitimate inquiry into private character, or public conduct, and no infamy is comparable to that of magnifying the faults, or libelling the fame of the illustrious dead.

"Consider," says a learned German, "under how many categories, down to the most impertinent, the world inquires concerning great men, and never wearies striving to represent to itself their whole structure, aspect, procedure outward and inward. Blame not the world for such curiosity about its great ones; this comes of the world's old-established necessity to worship.—Blame it not, pity it rather with a certain loving respect. Nevertheless, the last stage of human perversion, it has been said, is, when sympathy corrupts itself into envy, and the indestructible interest we take in men's doings has become a joy over their faults and misfortunes; this is the last and lowest stage—lower than this we cannot go."

In a word, that species of biography which is written for contemporaries, and not for posterity, is worse than worthless. It would be well for the memory of many recent authors, if their injudicious friends had made a simple obituary serve the purpose of a history.

It is rarely the lot of the wayward child of genius to have a Currie for his historian, and hence is it that frailties, which might have awakened sympathy, are now only mooted, to be remembered with abhorrence. It is greatly to be regretted that eminent medical men are not often to be met with, qualified, by Dr. Currie, by literary attainments, as well as professional ability, for undertakings of this kind. No class of men have the means of obtaining so intimate a knowledge of human nature, so familiar an acquaintance with the unmasked mind. The secret thoughts of the invalid are as obvious as the symptoms of his disease: there is no deception in the sick chamber; the veil of the temple is removed, and humanity lies before the attendant, in all its truth, in all its helplessness, and for the honourable physician lies—if we may be allowed the expression —in all its holiness. No such medical attendant, we venture to assert, ever went through a long life of practice, and had reason to think worse of his fellow men for the knowledge of humanity he

obtained at the bed-side of the sick. Far from it, the misintelligence, the misapprehension, that in society are the groundless source of the animosities which put even the feelings of the philanthropist to the test, are here unknown; the only wonder of the physician is, that amidst so much suffering as he is daily called to witness, human nature should be presented to his view in so good, and not unfrequently in so noble, an aspect.

It is not amongst the Harveys, the Hunters, or the Heberdens of our country, or indeed amongst the enlightened physicians of any other, that we must look for the disciples of a gloomy misanthropy.

In spite of all the Rochefoucaults, who have libelled humanity,—in spite of all the cynics, who have snarled at its character, the tendency of the knowledge of our fellow-men, is to make us love mankind. It is to the practical, and thorough knowledge of human nature, which the physician attains by the exercise of his art, that the active benevolence and general liberality which peculiarly distinguishes the medical profession, is mainly to be attributed. "Do I," says Zimmerman, "in my medical character feel any malignity or hatred to my species, when I study the nature, and explore the secret causes of those weaknesses and disorders which are incidental to the human

frame; when I examine the subject, and point out, for the general benefit of all mankind, as well as for my own satisfaction, all the frail and imperfect parts in the anatomy of the human body?"

The more extensive our knowledge of human nature is, and the better acquainted we make ourselves with that strong influence which mind and body mutually exert, the greater will be the indulgence towards the errors of our species, and the more will our affections be enlarged. How slight are those alterations in health—almost imperceptible to the ordinary observer—which have produced or aggravated the gravest mental infirmities! And how incapable is he of forming a just idea of them, who is unable, not only to detect, but to estimate the importance of those apparent trivial physical derangements with which they are so intimately connected.

It would be folly to imagine that an ordinary disease exerts such an absolute dominion over the mind, that the moral perceptions are overpowered or perverted, and that the individual ceases to be responsible for his errors. When the intemperate man "puts an enemy into his mouth to steal away his senses," and under its maddening influence commits a violent assault upon his neighbour, no one doubts but that a state of temporary insanity was productive of

the offence; nevertheless, the offender knew that such insanity was the inevitable consequence of intemperance, and he is punished for it accordingly.

The literary man who indulges in habits prejudicial to his health, cannot be supposed ignorant of the effects that must arise from excessive application; and who can say he is guiltless of the infirmities he drags upon him?

There is a case in our criminal records of a thief going out in the middle of the night to rob a hen-roost, and being attacked by a dog, he fired at the animal, and chanced to kill a servant of its owner, who had concealed himself behind the kennel. There was no malice; the mischief was unpremeditated, but the last degree of violence was incidental to the first, and the law did not hold him guiltless of the murder.

The studious man sets out with stealing an hour or two from his ordinary repose: sometimes perhaps more; and finishes by devoting whole nights to his pursuits. But this night-work leads to exhaustion, and the universal sense of sinking in every organ that accompanies it, suggests the use of stimulants, most probably of wine; alcohol, however, in some shape or other. And what is the result?—why, the existence that is passed in a constant circle of excitement and ex-

haustion, is shortened, or rendered miserable by such alternations; and the victim becomes accessary to his own sufferings.

These are, indeed, extreme cases, yet are they cases in point; in all, are the offenders held responsible for their crimes or errors, but nevertheless are they entitled to our pity.

In a word, if the literary man consume his strength and spirits in his study, forego all necessary exercise, keep his mind continually on the stretch, and even, at his meals, deprive the digestive organs of that nervous energy which is then essential to their healthy action; if the proteiform symptoms of dyspepsia at last make their appearance, and the innumerable anomalous sufferings which, under the name of nervous and stomachic ailments, derange the viscera, and rack the joints of the invalid; if by constant application, the blood is continually determined to the brain, and the calibre of the vessels enlarged to the extent of causing pressure or effusion in that vital organ; in any case, if the mischief there is allowed to proceed slowly and steadily, perhaps for years, (as in the case of Swift,) giving rise to a long train of nervous miseries—to hypochondria in its gloomiest form, or mania in its wildest mood, or paralysis in the expressionless aspect of fatuity, (that frequent termination of the literary career;)

who can deny that the sufferer has, in a great measure, drawn the evil on himself, but who will not admit that his infirmities of mind and body are entitled to indulgence and compassion?

The errors of genius demand no less. "A vigorous mind," says Burke, "is as necessarily accompanied by violent passions, as a great fire with great heat." And to such a mind, whatever be its frailties, the just and the charitable will be inclined to deem it, like poor Burns,

> "Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
> By passion driven,
> But yet the light that led astray,
> Was light from heaven."

CHAPTER II.

ADVANTAGES OF LITERARY PURSUITS.

A DISTINCTION has been made between literary men and men of letters; the former title has been given to authors, the latter to the general scholar and lover of science.

In these volumes the term literary is applied to all persons who make books the business of their lives, or who are addicted to studious habits; and our observations apply to those who think too much on any subject, whether that subject be connected with legal, polemical, or medical erudition.

Literature of late years has become so general a pursuit, that it is no small stock of knowledge which enables a man to keep pace with public information: go into what society we may, we are sure of meeting some individual with all the honours of recent authorship thick upon him.

It is the purport of this chapter to point out the use and the abuse of studious habits and literary temperaments. Perhaps the greatest of the advantages are those which are least ob-

vious to the observer. It is not denied by many, that every facility afforded to the acquisition of knowledge is an advancement of the public good; and, moreover, an avoidance of the mischief which leisure unoccupied inflicts on life.

But the latter benefit is generally overlooked only because the tendency is natural to underrate the importance of familiar facts. It surely is not the least advantage of literary employment that it enables us to live in a state of blissful ignorance of our next-door neighbour's fortune, faith and politics; that it produces a state of society which admits of no invasion on domestic privacy, and furnishes us with arms against *ennui*, which supersede the necessity of a standing army of elderly female moralists, and domestic politicians. In large cities, at least, literature occupies the ground which politics and scandal keep possession of in small ones; in the time of Tacitus the evil was common to the communities of both:

> "Vitium parvis magnisque civitatibus commune
> Ignorantium et invidiam."

Leisure, it seems, had no better occupation ere "the art of multiplying manuscripts through the intervention of machinery" was discovered; but in these days of book-publishing celebrity, when

the Press pours volumes on the town with the velocity of Perkin's steam-gun, one has hardly sufficient leisure to acquire a knowledge even of the names of those "dread counterfeits" of dead men's thoughts, which living plagiarism is continually recasting and sending forth. The grand distinction between metropolitan and provincial society, is the dearth of literature in the latter. In country towns every individual has a portion of his time to devote to country politics, or, as he thinks, to the affairs of his country; and these matters engross too much of his attention to allow him either time or taste for books. If we analyze the bane of all provincial society, the result of the painful investigation is to leave no other ingredients in the crucible of the mind, than politics and scandal. The former is confined to no one portion of country life—it pervades the whole; it constitutes half the business of existence; it forms the first of all its recreations, and embroils a neighbourhood of perhaps the kindest hearted beings in perpetual heart-burnings. But however useful and pleasant it may be to devote attention to public matters, to the affairs of kingdoms, or contested counties, to suffer these subjects to absorb all the faculties of the mind, is to indulge in a passion which becomes the pest of society. Politics may be the profession of Mr.

Hume, the trade of Mr. Cobbett, the calling of Mr. Hunt, and the clerical vocation of that gentleman who enjoys the enviable title of the Devil's Chaplain; but if we delude ourselves with the idea that we exert any happy influence over our country, or our own peace, by the unceasing agitation of political questions, we have formed a mistaken notion of our duties, as well as of our recreations. It is not to politics we must look for the enjoyment of tranquil leisure, nor from them we are to expect that happiness which in a great degree depends upon ourselves.

"How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find."

In fact, the domineering passion for politics which so largely prevails in provincial towns, it it deserve the name of a recreation, is one of that sort which his Plutonic majesty may be supposed to feel a peculiar interest in promoting, in those dominions where hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness are presumed to dwell. The tendency of literature, on the other hand, is to turn the current of our thoughts into the more gentle streams of private happiness; and it is literature alone, that can banish the demon of party discord

from the social board, where the sound of politics is the signal for strife; from the private circle, where calumny has been putting "rancours in the vessels of our peace;' and even from the precincts of the boudoir, where the breath of scandal not unfrequently contaminates the rosy atmosphere of love itself. If the tea-table has ceased to be the terrible areopagus of village politics, where private reputation used formerly to be consigned to the tender mercies of maiden gentlewomen and venerable matrons, whose leisure had no other occupation—it is because literature has afforded them an employment more pleasing to themselves, and less injurious to others. It would be idle to expatiate on the good which literary pursuits are calculated to effect in every circle. The country gentleman need not be reminded that literature, of all sports, even when pursued as a mere desultory pastime, is the noblest pleasure that can be chased. The military man is well aware that the days of Ensign Northerton are long gone by, and that it has ceased to be the fashion to shoot maledictions at literature, even through the sides of Homer. The learned professions are no longer ashamed to couple their graver studies with the lighter graces of erudition, whose tendrils may cling around the loftiest branches of science

without encumbering its technical attainments, the higher orders are well aware, that when the "blood of all the Howards" cannot ennoble an unenlightened lord, a literary name may afford a title to immortality that any nobleman might be proud to aspire to. The middling classes of society have too much of that "strong, sound, roundabout common sense" which Locke has ascribed to them, to deceive themselves with the pretext that the duties of any avocation are incompatible with literary pursuits, or to need the authority of Seneca for the conviction that "leisure without books is the sepulture of the living soul." The first advantage of a literary and scientific institution in provincial towns, is the bringing of those together who only require to see one another in the social light of literary intercourse, to esteem each other's worth more highly than individuals of the same community often do.

Nothing tends more to the small sweet courtesies of life than the extension of knowledge, the removal of ignorance and prejudice. "The commonwealth of letters," to use the elegant language of a modern philosopher, "is of no party, and of no nation; it is a pure republic, and always at peace; its shades are disturbed not by domestic malice, or foreign levy; they

resound not with the cries of faction, or public animosity; falsehood is the only enemy their inhabitants denounce; Truth, and her minister Reason, is the only guide they follow." In a word, every mode of developing the god-like apprehension which is the connecting medium between mere organic and spiritual existence, is a vindication of our title to immortality, and an evidence of the nobility of that attribute on which we rest our superiority over the brute creation. "It is through literature and science," says Davy, "that we may look forward with confidence to a state of society in which the different orders and classes of men, will contribute more effectually to the support of each other than they have hitherto done. Considering and hoping that the human species is capable of becoming more enlightened and more happy, we can only expect that the different parts of the great whole of society should be intimately united by means of knowledge; that they should act as the children of one great Parent, with one determined end, so that no power may be rendered useless, and no exertions thrown away."

CHAPTER III.

ABUSES OF LITERARY PURSUITS.

The disadvantages of literature, and consequently the advantages of ignorance, are much better understood in Turkish countries, and a more salutary terror entertained of them than in any Christian clime. But even in the latter, there are many good and able men—amongst whom we are happy to be able to place that very respectable and consistent gentleman, Mr. William Cobbett—who regard the march of intellect with no very favourable eyes, and who think, with the martyr of the gridiron, that the progress of crime is in a direct ratio with the pace of "the schoolmaster," and that the result of the labours of that great functionary has been neither conducive to the peace of Europe, or the tranquillity of England. If the schoolmaster has been abroad, verily it must be acknowledged, the democrat has followed so closely at his heels, that the energies awakened by the former have been seized on and perverted by the latter. And truly it must be confessed, the benevolent in-

tentions of the schoolmaster have been too often like those of the republican philanthropist towards the needy knife-grinder. The husks of science have been too frequently the only gifts he had to offer, when the popular stomach had need of something more substantial. A famished tailor, to very little purpose, acquires a smattering of geometry; a butcher, of algebra; or any others of the order of "the great unwashed," of an elementary knowledge of political economy; milliners, to little advantage, may become cunning in conchology; and even tradesmen when they dunned us, might present themselves at our doors, embodying in their persons all the principles of the exact sciences, and yet derive no benefit from their knowledge of mathematics.

The schoolmaster has indeed been abroad in the lower walks of life, but may he not have commenced, like the Irish tutor, at the wrong end of learning, and launched his raw disciples too soon into the great ocean of erudition, and too prematurely set them afloat, with the promise of a pleasant and profitable voyage? Such a voyage might be agreeable enough when no perils were at hand; but "if their poor deluded bark" had to encounter the squalls of party strife and the surge of discontent, like unskilful mariners, they might be likely to hug a rocky shore, and

discover, when it was too late, they had been turned adrift without chart or compass to direct or guide them, or enable them to take advantage of the security of good sea room.

This grievous error of the schoolmaster, we apprehend, has had much to do with the ridicule that has been thrown on the march of intellect. The minds of the middling classes may have been prepared for the reception of the elements of scientific knowledge, but not so with the capacities of the lower classes; useful and agreeable instruction of a literary kind was what was adapted to them, and that precisely which they did not receive.

A society for the diffusion of rational happiness, peaceful, orderly, and contented feelings, was the sort of society whose labours might have been useful to the rural population; these might have tended to have rendered them contented with their lot, while other efforts may have been only calculated to raise them above it, and even make them dissatisfied with its laborious duties. Of late, however, many cheap productions, combining useful and amusing matter, free from politics, and fitted for their capacities, have sprung up; but it is surprising how few of them have yet made their way into the hands of the peasantry. Were they more gene-

rally diffused, it is very probable that the beer-shops, with the weekly provision of penny republicanism, those inseparable companions the "Register," and the "Poor Man's Guardian," would lose a great portion of their attraction.

Some paradoxical philosophers have exercised their ingenuity in maintaining that knowledge is a source of misery, and that ignorance is bliss. Solomon himself was not insensible to the "*delitias ineptiarum*;" in the multitude of wisdom, says the wise man, is grief, and he that increaseth wisdom increaseth sorrow. The old Latin axiom will have no great genius free from a dash of insanity. Festus told St. Paul that much learning had made him mad; and Sophocles has lauded the beatitude of ignorance, "*nihil scire vita jocundissima.*" Machiavel forbade princes to addict themselves to learning. Martial recommends us to break our inkstands and burn our books; and an ancient physician affirms that the common course of education doth no other than to make the student a learned fool, or a sickly wise man.

There is, however, an observation in the "Adventurer," which, although "a modern instance," is more to the purpose than any of the "old saws" we have just quoted. "If we apply to authors themselves for an account of their state,

it will appear very little to deserve envy, for they have been in all ages addicted to complaint, and few have left their names to posterity without some appeal to future candour from the perverseness of malice of their own times. We have, nevertheless, been inclined to doubt whether authors, however querulous, are in reality more miserable than their fellow men."

The truth is, the abuses of study are its only disadvantages. St. Austin has well called it "*scientia scientiarum, omni melle dulcior, omni pane suavior, omni vino hilarior.*" No wonder if the student, in the enjoyment of such a pleasure, forget the pangs which over application is sure to entail on the constitution. It is indeed so seductive a pursuit, that the wear and tear of mind and body produce no immediate weariness, and at the moment no apparent ills. But study has no sabbath, the mind of the student has no holiday, "the labour he delights in physics pain;" he works his brain as if its delicate texture was an imperishable material which no excess was capable of injuring, Idleness to him is the *ærugo animi* the *rubigo ingenii;* but the insidious corrosive of intense thought and incessant study is taken into no account, its certain effects are overlooked because its action at the time is imperceptible. "Surely," says Ficinus, "scholars are

the most foolish men in the world; other men look to their tools—a painter will wash his pencils, a smith will look to his hammer, a husbandman will mind his plough-irons, a huntsman will have a care of his hounds, a musician of his lute—scholars alone neglect that instrument which they daily use, by which they range over the world, and which, by study, is much consumed."

It seems, indeed, little short of madness to neglect that instrument on the condition of whose delicate chords the harmony of every tone of intellect depends, and which, once "jangled out of time and harsh," all the sweet music of the settled mind is spoiled, perhaps, for ever.

And what is there in the *sanctam insaniam* of genius to enamour us of its gloom, and to walk in the paths of error which lead to it? error *gratissimus mentis* it may be, and seductive as the facination of passion and poetry can make it, but what is there in the distempered visions of Tasso, Cowper, Collins, Sharpe, or Swift, to reconcile us to the ecstasies of the disordered mind, or to persist in the same habits, or continue the same excessive exertions, which disturb their reason?

So long as life is admitted to be the result of the co-existence of mind and body—so long as we are convinced of the intimacy of their union

by the manner in which they reciprocally sympathise with each other—so long as we perceive the powers of the mind augmenting with health, and diminishing with disease—so long as we observe that the mind is incapable of occupation when the body is wearied by violent exercise, and in its turn unfitted for exercise, when the mental powers are fatigued by over exertion of the former—we can arrive but at one conclusion, that the balance of health can be maintained in its natural equilibrium only when mental exertion is proportioned to bodily activity. When this is not the case literary fame is dearly purchased; and all the glory that surrounds it cannot make amends for the health that has been sacrificed for its attainment. "*On est trop savant quand on l'est au depens de sa sante; a quoi sert la science sans le bonheur?*"

In conclusion, there are a few words of Tissot's which serve the purpose of a summary of the preceding observations. To comprehend the influence of mental labour on physical health, it is only necessary to remember, in the first place, that the brain is in action when one thinks; secondly, that the tendency of continual action is to produce fatigue, and that fatigue deranges the functions, because every debilitated

organ performs its duties imperfectly and irregularly; thirdly, that all the nerves proceed from the brain, and precisely from that part of it which is the organ of thought, the common sensorium; fourthly, that the nerves are one of the most important parts of the human machine, that they are necessary to every function, and that when once their action is deranged, the whole animal economy suffers from that derangement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NERVOUS ENERGY.

But what is this subtle fluid which exerts so wonderful an influence over mind and body? Under how many names has the knowledge of its nature baffled human inquiry in all ages! and how ignorant still are we of its essence! still is it known to us only by its effects.

We feel when the nervous energy abounds that every thing is well with us; we find when it is deficient that we are depressed; we know if it is exhausted that we become debilitated; and if suddenly destroyed, that death must immediately ensue!

Is it then the vital principle, or the cause of it—or is it indeed the cause of that effect which Brown mistook for animation, when he asserted that irritability was life itself? Motion, no doubt, is the grand characteristic of life; but motion is only the consequence of irritability. The propulsion of the blood is immediately caused by the irritability of the muscular fibres of the heart and its channels; but nature accomplishes

all her phenomena by physical agency. To what agent, therefore, are we to refer this irritability, before we arrive at the ultimate cause of life—that *causa causarum* which is God! Is it to electrical agency we are to look for the solution of the mystery? or is there any thing analogous to the principle of life in the phenomena of the electric fluid? The nervous energy, however, is so much a part and parcel of the vital principle, their union is so intimate, that whether they stand in the relation of cause and effect, or are different names only for the same essence, they cannot be separately considered. The few observations that follow are not altogether irrelevant to the subject of these pages, nor is there any thing beyond the range of legitimate inquiry, in the consideration of the nature of that power which is the source of animation. Were we, indeed, to jump at the summary conclusion, that life is the sum total of the functions, as some have asserted, we should fall into the error of mistaking a subordinate effect for an original cause; forgetting, that although life is co-existent with the developement and cessation of these functions, it is the nervous energy which calls them into action. Whatever be its nature, it is yet an intermediate link, evident, though not obvious in that perpetual chain of cause

and effect which is the connecting medium between animation and the great Author of it.

"The first link of that chain," says Darwin, "is rivetted to the throne of God, dividing itself into innumerable diverging branches, which, like the nerves arising from the brain, permeate the most minute and most remote extremities of the system, diffusing motion and sensation through the whole.

"As every cause is superior in power to the effect which it has produced, so our idea of the power of the Almighty Creator becomes more elevated and sublime, as we trace the operations of nature from cause to cause; climbing up the links of those chains of beings, till we ascend to the great source of all things."

The doctrine which would have us suppose that this wonderful machine, the human frame, originated in a fortuitous concourse of atoms, has its error in failing to trace the causes of the combination of matter to their remote origin, and therefore chaos and its products are to this system what nature and the results of her well-ordered designs, are to true philosophy. The doctrine we allude to confounds the attributes of mind with the properties of matter, by referring the mental faculties to the aggregation of the functions of the body. This is not only

the error of ascribing remote results to their nearest origins, but of referring dissimilar effects to the same immutable cause. This doctrine, like that of Pythagoras, travels in a continual circle of life and death, and the only two truths it admits are,—death, because it is certain and inevitable, and reproduction, because every thing that lives must die and under-die and undergo the process of decomposition, before its particles again acquire vitality, and enter into the formation of new compounds.

The whole history of humanity is to this system, one series of transformations,

> "Nothing of it that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea change
> Into something rare and strange."

To it, of all abodes, the grave is the most pregnant with vitality; every corse that is consigned to earth, confers life on myriads of other creatures who had not known that enjoyment if death had not occurred. But even though every atom on the surface of the earth may have been a portion of something once living, now inert—though humanity may not shuffle off its "mortal coil," without peopling the clay which covers it with its spoils, where is the spirit to be sought that animated man—in what unhal-

lowed recepticle has the aura of intellect taken up its abode?

"Thou apart,
Above, beyond, O tell me, mighty mind,
Where art thou! shall I dive into the deep,
Call to the sun, or ask the roaring winds,
Where art thou?"

In this dreary doctrine, trivial truths are curiously considered, and those of most importance wholly overlooked. It illustrates the horrors of death, and renders the hope of future life a repugnant feeling, a loathsome anticipation. Its lights are like the lamps in sepulchres, they gleam upon the dead, but they give no lustre to the living. That light of life, that god-like apprehension which renders man the monarch of created beings, is wholly lost sight of in the inquiry after the final disposition of the particles of which his body is composed.

Life and death have their analogies for this system, but the spirit of man and immortality have none! There is no link between humanity and heaven! The body is allowed to have its transformations, but the mind is not worthy of a transmigration, not even to be portioned among the worms which have their being in our forms.

By whatever name this vital principle is designated, animus or anima, aura or efflatus, spark or flame, etherial or celestial, perplexity at every step besets the doctrine of its extinction. And however speciously, and even sincerely, its entertainer may uphold it, still in secret there are, there must be, misgivings of its truth.

> "And yet one doubt
> Pursues him still, lest all he cannot die—
> Lest that pure breath of life, the spirit of man,
> Which God inspired, cannot together perish
> With this corporeal clod; then in the grave,
> Or in some dismal place, who knows
> But he shall die a living death! O thought
> Most horrible, if true!"

In a word, the error of this doctrine, like that of many others, is, in attributing obvious effects to their immediate instead of their remote and ultimate cause, and in tracing similitudes in dissimilar analogies.

CHAPTER V.

THE NERVOUS ENERGY.

The nature of this vital fluid has been the enquiry of all ages, and up to the present time it must be admitted that nothing is known of its essence. Its effects, both in animal and vegetable life, have been found in some important respects to be analogous with those of an agent the most wonderful in nature, the most subtle of all fluids, the most powerful of all stimulants in its action on the life, whether of plants or animals—the electric fluid.

Although science, (with all the rapidity of its march,) has thrown little if any additional light on its phenomena for the last thirty years, yet a few facts have been noticed whose tendency is to show that there is a similitude between the phenomena of the nervous and the electric fluids.

Whenever the properties of the latter shall be better understood than they are at present, in all probability the principle of the nervous

energy will be more cognizable to the range (limited as it must necessarily always be) of human knowledge. A day, in all probability, will come, when the genius of some future Franklin will make that "fifth element," and most powerful of all, better known than it now is; and trace the analogies of the subtle spark which pervades all space, with that corporeal fire which fills the nerves with life, and heat, and communicates vitality and vigor, to every fibre of the heart and its remotest vessels. The nature of the nervous energy may then become better understood, and that invisible aura which fans the blood and invigorates the body, be known to us by something more than its effects.

"In this view," to use the words of one who applied electrical agency to the grandest discoveries of our time, "we do not look to distant ages, or amuse ourselves with brilliant, though delusive dreams, concerning infinite improbability or the annihilation of disease or death. But we reason by analogy from simple facts. We consider only a state of human progression arising out of its present condition; we look for a time that we may reasonably expect, for a bright day of which we already behold the dawn!"

The influence which electricity exerts over vegetable life, till very lately has been overlooked, and even now the same fashion which domineers in academies as well as in boudoirs has rendered the doctrine of animal, or rather vital electricity, as apparently ridiculous as that of electro-chemical agency was considered, before Davy, by its means, changed the whole face of that science which he so nobly cultivated. Nothing, perhaps, has tended more to the discredit of this theory than the inordinate expectations which medical electricity called forth some forty or fifty years ago, when it was ushered into practice as a universal remedy, and which shared the fate of all new remedies whose powers are over-rated, abused, and ultimately decried. But of late years, on the continent, the influence of the electric fluid on vitality has again forced itself on public attention; and in the south of France we have seen whole vineyards in which numerous electrical conductors were attached to the plants, for the purpose of increasing the progress of vegetation, and of invigorating the vines.

In the same manner does electricity act on the animal body, the circulation being quickened by its stimulus, and the fluids driven through the small capillary vessels with in-

creased velocity. Some recent discoveries of Dr. Wilson Philip have proved that the circulation in the smaller capillary tubes may continue for some hours after death, and that their current in life is not synchronous with that of the heart, and, indeed, that the doctrine of the circulation of the blood is inadequate to the explanation of the phenomenon just mentioned.

The facts that are stated we have no reason to doubt; on the contrary, further experience will probably tend to corroborate them; but nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the explanation which is given of the phenomenon.

An observation of Brydone, however, throws no little light on the subject: "If you cause water," he says, "to drop through a small capillary tube, the moment you electrify the tube the fluid runs in a full stream. Electricity," he adds, "must be considered as the great vivifying principle of nature, by which she carries on most of her operations. It is the most subtle and active of all fluids—it is a kind of soul which pervades and quickens every part of nature. When an equal quantity of electricity is diffused through the air, and over the face of the earth, every thing is calm and quiet, but if by accident one part of matter has acquired a

greater quantity than another, the most dreadful consequences ensue before the equilibrium can be restored: nature is convulsed, and thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and whirlwinds ensue."

But it is not the elements only that are thrown into disorder, by these electrical changes in the atmosphere, every thing that is organic suffers by them; the vigor of plants is diminished, the animal functions are disturbed, and the nervous system of delicate individuals, strangely and unaccountably depressed.

Who has experienced the influence of the scirrocco of the south of Europe, the poisonous kamsin of the East, or even the summer south-east wind of our own clime, without feelings of indescribable lassitude, which are not to be accounted for by any alteration in the temperature, but solely to the variation in the quantity of electricity diffused through the atmosphere. In the prevalence of these winds, the air is nearly deprived of it altogether, and the nervous system is simultaneously deprived of its elasticity. In damp weather likewise, when it becomes absorbed by the surrounding humidity, every invalid is well aware how unaccountably dejected his spirits become, and how feebly the various functions of the body are performed, especially

those of the digestive organs. This state of morbid irritability of the whole frame continues till the north or west wind, as Bridone has well expressed it, "awakens the activity of the animating power of electricity, which soon restores our energies and enlivens all nature, which seemed to droop and languish in its absence."

In very frosty weather, on the other hand, when the atmosphere is surcharged with electricity, there is a corresponding elevation of spirits, which sometimes amounts to an almost painful state of excitement. In our temperate climate, this phenomenon, perhaps, is seldom experienced, but, in a certain degree, its influence in very cold dry weather is evident enough. On a frosty day, for one melancholy mien we observe, we meet a hundred smiling faces, the hilarity of whose expression is due to no other cause than that which has been just named. Rousseau has eloquently described the extraordinary elasticity of spirits which he experienced in ascending some of the higher regions of the Alps. Every traveller is aware of the more than usual lively sentiment of existence which he feels within him when he is traversing a lofty mountain.

The painful effects arising from too much electricity in the air, were experienced by Pro-

fessor Saussure and his companion, while ascending the Alps they were caught amidst thunder clouds, and were astonished to find their bodies filled with electricity, and every part of them so saturated with it, that spontaneous sparks were emitted with a crackling noise, and the same painful sensations which are felt by those who are electrified by art.

Larrey, in his memoirs of the Russian campaign, mentions his having seen similar effects, from the excess of the electric fluid. On one occasion, he says, when the cold was excessive, the manes of the horses were found electrified in a manner similar to that described by Saussure.

Altogether it is truly wonderful, that an agent that exerts so powerful an influence on vitality, should have met with so little inquiry from the time of Priestly to that of Davy, or at least that no discovery, except that of electro-chemical agency, should have resulted from any inquiry that may have been attempted. And that wonder is the greater, when we recall the prophetic enthusiasm with which both of those illustrious men, whom we have just named, have spoken of the results which science has to expect from the enlargement of our knowledge of the elements of electricity.

Mr. Faraday, however, we are happy to find, has lately taken up this neglected branch of science, and made discoveries which are likely to lead to most important results.

Sir Humphrey Davy concluded the account of the extraordinary effects he had experienced by the application of electrical agency to chemical action, in these words: "Natural electricity has hitherto been little investigated, except in the case of its evident and powerful concentration in the atmosphere. Its slow and silent operations in every part of the surface of the globe will probably be found more immediately and importantly connected with the order and economy of nature: and investigation on this subject can hardly fail to enlighten our philosophical systems of the earth, and may possibly place new powers within our reach."

Priestly sums up his opinions on this subject in these emphatic terms:—"Electricity seems to be an inlet into the internal structures of bodies, on which all their sensible properties depend: by pursuing, therefore, this new light, the bounds of natural science may possibly be extended beyond what we now can form any idea of. New worlds may be opened to our view, and the glory of the great Sir Isaac Newton himself may be eclipsed, by a new set of pilosophers, in quite a new field of speculation."

Before we conclude this subject, there is a circumstance respecting Davy and his biographer, Dr. Paris, deserving of attention. It appears that Davy, in common with many enlighted philosophers and physicians of the present day, was dissatisfied with the explanation which is commonly given of the physiology of respiration, and the mode in which heat is supposed to be evolved by that process. Where Davy doubted, he was not a man likely to be stopped in the search of truth, by the jargon of science or the plausible fallacies of physiology. He accordingly applied himself to the discovery of a more satisfactory theory of respiration, and the result of his inquiries was, that *the nervous fluid was identical with electricity*, and that the heat that was supposed to be evolved by the process of respiration, was extricated by electrical agency.

This theory of the identity of the nervous fluid with electricity, we look upon as a conjecture (discovery it cannot be called) which will one day lead to more important results than have arisen from the grandest of his electro-chemical discoveries.

His biographer tells us that "in considering the theory of respiration, Davy supposed that phos-oxygen combined with the venous blood without decomposition; but on reaching the brain that

electricity was liberated, which he believed to be identical with the nervous fluid. Supposing sensations to be motions of the nervous ether, or light, in the form of electricity exciting the medullary substance of the nerves and brain."

This opinion Dr. Paris calls "a theory which has scarcely a parallel in extravagance and absurdity!!!" These are strong terms. Science, we think, should discard the use of harsh ones, but whatever be the fate of this opinion of Davy's, the commentary has no parallel in presumption.

The theory of the identity of the nervous and electric fluid may receive little countenance for a time; it may be too much contemned to attract even the notoriety of opposition to its doctrine; it may be buried in oblivion for half a century, but the ghost of this opinion will rise again, though it may not be in judgment against its impugners—their peaceful slumbers will probably be too profound to be incommoded by the resurgam of the opinion they opposed. Perhaps when Davy propounded it, he might have thought like Kepler, "My theory may not be received at present, but posterity will adopt it. I can afford to wait thirty or forty years for the world's justice, since nature has waited three thousand years for an observer;" for Davy, like Kepler, had his moments of "glorious egotism," but like the astronomer, he had genius to redeem his vanity.

CHAPTER VI.

INFLUENCE OF STUDIOUS HABITS ON THE DURATION OF LIFE.

It is a question whether different kinds of literary pursuits do not produce different diseases, or at least, different modifications of disease; but there is very little doubt, that a vast difference in the duration of life is to be observed in the various learned professions, and the several directions given to mental application, whether by the cultivation of poetry, the study of the law, the labours of miscellaneous composition, or the abstraction of philosophical inquiries. "Every class of genius," says D'Israeli, "has distinct habits; all poets resemble one another, as all painters, and all mathematicians. There is a conformity in the cast of their minds, and the quality of each is distinct from the other: the very faculty which fits them for one particular pursuit is just the reverse required for the other."

An excellent old author, who wrote on the diseases of particular avocations about two cen-

turies ago, has spoken in the following terms of the diseases of literary men. "Above all the retainers to learning, the bad influence of study and fatigue falls heaviest upon the writers of books for the public, who seek to immortalize their names; by writers, I mean authors of merit, for there are many, from an insatiable itch for notoriety, who patch up indigested medleys, and make abortive rather than mature productions, like those poets who will throw you off a hundred verses, '*Stantes in pede uno*,' as Horace has it. It is your wise and grave authors, day and night, who work for posterity, who wear themselves out with labour. But they are not so much injured by study who only covet to know what others knew before them, and reckon it the best way to make use of other people's madness, as Pliny says of those who do not take the trouble to build new houses, but rather buy and live in those that are built by other people. Many of these professors of learning are subject to diseases peculiar to their respective callings, as your eminent jurists, preachers, and philophers, who spend their lives in public schools."

For the purpose of ascertaining the influence of different studies on the longevity of authors, the tables which follow have been constructed, in which the names and ages of the most cele-

brated authors in the various departments of literature and science are set down, each list containing twenty names of those individuals who have devoted their lives to a particular pursuit, and excelled in it. No other attention has been given to the selection than that which eminence suggested, without any regard to the ages of those who presented themselves to notice. The object was to give a fair view of the subject, whether it told for or against the opinions that have been expressed in the preceding pages. It must, however, be taken into account, that as we have only given the names of the most celebrated authors, and in the last table those of arts in their different departments, a greater longevity in each pursuit might be inferred from the aggregate of the ages than properly may belong to the general range of life in each pursuit. For example, in moral or natural philosophy, a long life of labour is necessary to enable posterity to judge of the merits of an author; and these are ascertained not only by the value, but also by the amount of his compositions. It is by a series of researches, and re-casts of opinion, that profound truths are arrived at, and by numerous publications that such truths are forced on the public attention. For this a long life is necessary, and it certainly appears from the list that is subjoined,

that the vigour of a great intellect is favourable to longevity in every literary pursuit, wherein imagination is seldom called on.

There is another point to be taken into consideration, that the early years of genius are not so often remarkable for precocity, as is commonly supposed, and where it is otherwise, it would seem that the earlier the mental faculties are developed, the sooner the bodily powers begin to fail. It is still the old proverb with such prodigies, "So wise, so young, they say do ne'er live long." Moore says, the five most remarkable instances of early authorship, are those of Pope, Congreve, Churchill, Chatterton, and Byron." The first of these died in his fifty-sixth year, the second in his fifty-eighth, the third in his thirty-fourth, "the sleepless boy" committed suicide in his eighteenth, and Byron died in his thirty-seventh year.

Mozart, at the age of three years, began to display astonishing abilities for music, and in the two following years, composed some trifling pieces, which his father carefully preserved, and, like all prodigies, his career was a short one—he died at thirty-six. Tasso from infancy exhibited such quickness of understanding, that at the age of five he was sent to a Jesuit academy, and two years afterwards recited verses and

orations of his own composition; he died at fifty-one. Dermody was employed by his father, who was a schoolmaster, as an assistant in teaching the Latin and Greek languages in his ninth year; he died at twenty-seven. The American prodigy, Lucretia Davidson, was another melancholy instance of precocious genius, and early death. Keats wrote several pieces before he was fifteen, and only reached his twenty-fifth year. The ardour of Dante's temperament, we are told, was manifested in his childhood. The lady he celebrated in his poems under the name of Beatrice, he fell in love with at the age of ten, and his enthusiasm terminated with life at fifty-six. Schiller, at the age of fourteen, was the author of an epic poem; he died at forty-six. Cowley published a collection of his juvenile poems, called "Poetical Blossoms" at sixteen, and died at sixty-nine.

But it would be useless to enumerate instances in proof of the assertion, that the earlier the developement of the mental faculties, the more speedy the decay of the bodily powers.*

* One of the most remarkable instances, however, of precocity of talent and early application, upon record, is the late celebrated Archæologist Visconti, who died in 1818, at the age of sixty-seven. When only eighteen months old he knew his alphabet; at the age of two could distinguish and name the

busts of the Roman emperors, and is said to have read Latin and Greek as well as his native language, before he had completed his fourth year.

CHAPTER VII.

PRECOCIOUS TALENTS.

No common error is attended with worse consequences to the children of genius than the practice of dragging precocious talent into early notice, of encouraging its growth in the hot-bed of parental approbation, and of endeavouring to give the dawning intellect the precocious maturity of that fruit which ripens and rots almost simultaneously. Tissot has admirably pointed out the evils which attend the practice of forcing the youthful intellect. "The effects of study vary," says this author, "according to the age at which it is commenced: long-contined application kills the youthful energies. I have seen children full of spirit attacked by this literary mania beyond their years, and I have foreseen with grief the lot which awaited them; they commenced by being prodigies, and they ended by becoming stupid. The season of youth is consecrated to the exercise of the body, which strengthens it, and not to study, which debilitates and prevents its

growth. Nature can never successfully carry on two rapid developements at the same time. When the growth of intellect is too prompt, its faculties are too early developed, and mental application is permitted proportioned to this developement, the body receives no part of it, because the nerves cease to contribute to its energies; the victim becomes exhausted, and eventually dies of some insidious malady. The parents and guardians who encourage or require this forced application, treat their pupils as gardeners do their plants, who, in trying to produce the first rarities of the season, sacrifice some plants to force others to put forth fruit and flowers which are always of a short duration, and are inferior in every respect to those which come to their maturity at a proper season."

Johnson is, indeed, of opinion, that the early years of distinguished men, when minutely traced, furnish evidence of the same vigour or originality of mind, by which they are celebrated in after life. To a great many memorable instances this observation does not apply, but in the majority it unquestionably holds good, and especially in those instances in which the vigour which Johnson speaks of displays itself in the developement of a taste for general literature, and, still more for philosophical inquiries.

Scott's originality was early manifested as a story-teller, and not as a scholar; the twenty-fifth seat at the high school in Edinburg was no uncommon place for him. Yet was the future writer of romance skilful in the invention and narration of "tales of knight-errantry, and battles, and enchantments!"

"Before seven years of age," says Boccaccio, "when as yet I had met with no stories, was without a master, and hardly knew my letters, I had a natural talent for fiction, and produced some little tales."

Newton, according to his own account, was very inattentive to his studies, and low in his class, but was a great adept at kite-flying, with paper lanthorns attached to them, to terrify the country people of a dark night with the appearance of comets; and when sent to market with the produce of his mother's farm, was apt to neglect his business, and to ruminate at an inn over the laws of Kepler.

Bentham, we are told, was a remarkable forward youth, reading Rapin's England at the age of three years, as an amusement; Telemachus, in French, at the age of seven; and at eight the future patriarch of jurisprudence, it appears, was a proficient on the violin.

Buonarroti, while at school, employed every moment he could steal from his studies in drawing.

Professor Lesley, before his twelfth year, had such a talent for calculation, and geometrical exercise, that when introduced to Professor Robinson, and subsequently to Playfair, those gentlemen were struck with the extraordinary powers which he then displayed.

Goethe, in childhood, exhibited a taste for the fine arts; and at the age of eight or nine wrote a short description of twelve scriptural pictures.

Franklin, unconsciously, formed the outline of his future character from the scanty materials of a tallow-chandler's library; and the bias which influenced his after-career, he attributes to a perusal in childhood of Defoe's Essay on Projections.

All these, with the exception of Scott and Lesley, arrived to extreme old age; but there is nothing in the early indication of the ruling pursuit of their after lives, that was likely to exert an unfavourable influence on health. Those early pursuits were rather recreations than laborious exertions, and far different in their effects from those we have spoken of in the preceding instances of precocious talent. That difference in the various kinds of literary and scientific pursuits, and the influence of each on life, the following tables

are intended to exhibit; each list of names, it being remembered, containing twenty names, and the amount at the bottom of each the aggregate of the united ages.

TABLE I.

	Natural Philosophers.		Poets.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Bacon, R.	78	Ariosto	59
2	Buffon	81	Burns	38
3	Copernicus	70	Byron	37
4	Cuvier	64	Camoens	55
5	Davy	51	Collins	56
6	Euler	76	Cowle	49
7	Franklin	85	Cowper	69
8	Galileo	78	Dante	56
9	Halley, Dr.	86	Dryden	70
10	Herchell	84	Goldsmith	44
11	Kepler	60	Gray	57
12	La Lande	75	Metastasio	84
13	La Place	77	Milton	66
14	Lowenhoeck	91	Petrarch	68
15	Leibnitz	70	Pope	56
16	Linæus	72	Shenstone	50
17	Newton	84	Spencer	48
18	Tycho Brahe	55	Tasso	52
19	Whiston	95	Thomson	48
20	Wollaston	62	Young	84
	Total	1494	Total	1144

TABLE II.

	Moral Philosophers.		Dramatists.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Bacon - - -	65	Alfieri - - -	55
2	Bayle - - -	59	Corneille - - -	78
3	Berkeley, G. -	79	Goethe - - - -	82
4	Condorset - -	51	Massinger - - -	55
5	Condillac - -	65	Marlow - - -	32
6	Descartes - -	54	Otway - - - -	34
7	Diderot - -	71	Racine - - - -	60
8	Ferguson, A. -	92	Schiller - - - -	46
9	Fichte, J. T. -	52	Shakspeare - -	52
10	Hartley, D. -	52	Voltaire - - -	84
11	Helvetius - -	57	Congreve - - -	59
12	Hobbes - -	91	Colman, G. - -	61
13	Hume, - - -	65	Crebillon - - -	89
14	Kant - - -	80	Cumberland - -	80
15	Kalmes - -	86	Farquhar - - -	30
16	Locke - - -	72	Goldoni - - - -	85
17	Malebranche -	77	Jonson, B. - -	63
18	Reid, T. - -	86	Lope de Vega -	73
19	Stewart, D. -	75	Moliere - - -	53
20	St. Lambert -	88	Murphy - - -	78
	Total	1417	Total	1249

TABLE III.

	Authors on Law and Jurisprudence.		Miscellaneous and Novel Writers.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Bentham	85	Cervantes	70
2	Blackstone	57	Le Sage	80
3	Butler, C.	83	Scott	62
4	Coke	85	Fielding	47
5	Erskine	73	Smollett	51
6	Filangieri	36	Rabelais	70
7	Gifford	48	Defoe	70
8	Grotius	63	Ratcliffe	60
9	Hale	68	Richardson	72
10	Holt	68	Sterne	56
11	Littleton	75	Johnson	75
12	Mansfield	88	Addison	48
13	Montesquieu	66	Warton	78
14	Redesdale	82	Steele	59
15	Romilly	61	Tickell	54
16	Rolle	68	Montaigne	60
17	Tenterden	78	Bathurst, R.	84
18	Thurlow	74	Thornton	44
19	Vatel	53	Hawkesworth	59
20	Wilmot	83	Hazlitt	58
	Total	1394	Total	1257

TABLE IV.

	Authors on Revealed Religion.		Authors on Natural Religion.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Baxter - - -	76	Annett - - - -	55
2	Bellarmine -	84	Bolingbroke - -	79
3	Butler, John -	60	Cardan - - - -	75
4	Bossuet - -	77	Chubb - - - -	65
5	Calvin - - -	56	Drummond, Sir W.	68
6	Chillingworth	43	Dupuis - - - -	67
7	Doddridge -	54	Freret, N. - - -	61
8	Fox, G. - -	67	Gibbon - - - -	58
9	Knox, John -	67	Herbert, Lord - -	68
10	Lowth - - -	77	Jacobi - - - -	56
11	Luther - - -	63	Paine - - - -	72
12	Massillon - -	79	Pomponatius - -	63
13	Melancthon -	64	Rousseau - - -	66
14	Paley - - -	63	Spinoza - - -	45
15	Porteus - -	77	St. Pierre - - -	77
16	Priestly - -	71	Shaftesbury - -	42
17	Sherlock - -	67	Tindal - - - -	75
18	Wesley - -	88	Toland - - - -	53
19	Whitefield -	56	Vanini - - - -	34
20	Wycliffe - -	61	Volney - - - -	66
	Total	1350	Total	1245

TABLE V.

	Medical Authors.		Philologists.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Brown, J.	54	Bentley	81
2	Corvisart	66	Burton	64
3	Cullen	78	Casaubon	55
4	Darwin	72	Cheke	44
5	Fordyce	67	Hartzheim	70
6	Fothergill	69	Harman, J.	77
7	Gall	71	Heyne	84
8	Gregory, John	48	Lipsius	60
9	Harvey	81	Parr	80
10	Heberden	92	Pauw	61
11	Hoffman	83	Pighius	84
12	Hunter, J.	65	Porson	50
13	Hunter, W.	66	Raphelengius	59
14	Jenner	75	Salmatius	66
15	Mason Good	64	Scaliger, J. J.	69
16	Parcelsus	48	Sigonius	60
17	Pinel	84	Stephens, H.	71
18	Sydenham	66	Sylburgius	51
19	Tissot	70	Vossius	73
20	Willis, T.	54	Wolfius	64
	Total	1368	Total	1323

TABLE VI.

	Artists.		Musical Composers.	
	Name.	*Age.*	*Name.*	*Age.*
1	Bandinelli . .	72	Arne	68
2	Bernini . . .	82	Bach	66
3	Canova . . .	65	Beethoven . . .	57
4	Donatello . .	83	Burney	88
5	Flaxman . .	71	Bull	41
6	Ghiberti . . .	64	Cimarosa . . .	41
7	Giotto . . .	60	Corelli	60
8	Michael Angelo	96	Gluck	75
9	San Sovino .	91	Gretry	72
10	Verocchio . .	56	Handel	75
11	Caracci, A. .	49	Haydn	77
12	Claude . . .	82	Kalkbrenner . .	51
13	David . . .	76	Keiser	62
14	Guido . . .	67	Martini	78
15	Raphael . . .	37	Mozart	36
16	Reynolds . .	69	Paisello	75
17	Salvator Rosa	58	Piccini	71
18	Titian . . .	96	Porpore	78
19	Veronese, Paul	56	Scarlatti	78
20	West	82	Weber	40
	Total	1412	Total	1289

The following is the order of longevity that is exhibited in the various lists, and the average duration of life of the most eminent men, in each pursuit.

	Aggregate years.	*Average years.*
Natural Philosophers	1504	75
Moral Philosophers	1417	70
Sculptors and Painters	1412	70
Authors on Law and Jurisprudence	1394	69
Medical Authors	1368	68
Authors on Revealed Religion	1350	67
Philologists	1323	66
Musical Composers	1284	64
Novelists and Miscellaneous Authors	1257	62½
Dramatists	1249	62
Authors on Natural Religion	1245	62
Poets	1144	57

CHAPTER VIII.

LONGEVITY OF PHILOSOPHERS, POETS AND ASTRONOMERS.

From these tables it would appear, that those pursuits in which imagination is largely exerted, is unfavourable to longevity. We find the difference between the united ages of twenty natural philosophers, and that of the same number of poets, to be no less than three hundred and sixty years; or in other words, the average of life to be about seventy-five in the one, and fifty-seven in the other.

Natural philosophy has, then, the first place in the list of studies conducive to longevity, and it may therefore be inferred, to tranquillity of mind, and bodily well-being; and poetry appears to occupy the last. Why should this be so? Is natural philosophy a less laborious study, or calls for less profound reflection than poetry? Or is it that the latter is rather a passion than a pursuit, which is not confined to the exertion of a particular faculty, but which demands the exercise of all the faculties, and communicates excitement to

all our feelings? Or is it that the throes of imaginative labour are productive of greater exhaustion than those of all the other faculties?

Poetry may be said to be the natural language of the religion of the heart, whose universal worship extends to every object that is beautiful in nature or bright beyond it. But this religion of the heart is the religion of enthusiasm, whose inordinate devotion borders on idolatry, and whose exaltation, is followed by the prostration of the strength and spirits.

"Poetry," as Madame De Stael has beautifully expressed it, is the apotheosis of sentiment." But this deification of sublime conceptions costs the priest of nature not a little for the transfiguration of simple ideas into splendid imagery; no little wear and tear of mind and body, no small outlay of fervid feelings. No trifling expenditure of vital energy is required for the translation of fine thoughts from the regions of earth to those of heaven, and by the time that worlds of invention have been exhausted and new imagined, the poet has commonly abridged his life to immortalize his name. The old metaphysicians had an odd idea of the mental faculties, and especially of imagination, but which is fully as intelligible as any other psychological theory. They believed, we are told by Hibbert, that the soul was attended by

three ministering principles—common sense, the moderator, whose duty it was to control the sensorium—memory, the treasurer, whose office it was to retain the image collected by the senses—and fancy, the handmaid of the mind, whose business it was to recall the images which memory retained, and to embody its conceptions in various forms. But as this handmaid was found to be very seldom under the control of the moderator, common sense, they attributed the constant communication between the heart and brain to the agency of the animal spirits which act through the nerves, as couriers between both. At one period conveying delightful intelligence, at other times melancholy tidings, and occasionally altogether misconceiving the object of their embassy. By this means both head heart and were often led astray, and in this confusion of all conceived commands and all concocted spirits—the visions of poets, the dreams of invalids, and the chimeras of superstition, had their origin.—The greatest truths may be approached by the most fanciful vehicles of thought. Be these chimeras engendered where they may, in whatever pursuit the imagination is largely exercised, enthusiasm and sensibility are simultaneously developed, and these are qualities whose growth cannot be allowed to exuberate without becoming unquestion-

ably unfavourable to mental tranquillity, and consequently injurious to health.

Again, we find the cool dispassionate inquiries of moral philosophy, which are directed to the nature of the human mind, and to the knowledge of truths whose tendency is to educate the heart by settling bounds to its debasing passions, and to enlarge the mind by giving a fitting scope to its ennobling faculties, are those pursuits which tend to elevate, and at the same time to invigorate, our thoughts, and have no influence but a happy one on life. We need not be surprised to find the moral historians occupying the second place in the list of long-lived authors.

But, if the list of natural philosophers consisted solely of astronomers, the difference would be considerably greater between their ages and those of the poets, for the longevity of professors of this branch of science is truly remarkable. In the Time's Telescope for 1833, there is a list of all the eminent astronomers, from Thales to those of the last century; and out of eighty-five only twenty-five had died under the age of sixty, five had lived to between ninety and a hundred—eighteen between eighty and ninety—twenty-five between seventy and eighty—seventeen between sixty and seventy—ten between fifty and sixty—five between forty and fifty—and four between

thirty and forty. In no other pursuit does the biography of men of genius exhibit a longevity at all to be compared to this. No other science, indeed, tends so powerfully to raise the mind above those trivial vexations and petty miseries of life, which make the great amount of human evil. No other science is so calculated to spiritualize our faculties, to give a character of serenity to wonder, which never suffers contemplation to grow weary of the objects of its admiration. The tyranny of passion is subdued, the feelings tranquillized; all the trivial concerns of humanity are forgotten when the mind of the astronomer revels in the magnificence of "this most excellent canopy, the air; this brave o'erhanging firmament—this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire;" when he beholds worlds on worlds of diversified forms, rolling in fields of immeasurable space: the planets that encircle the sovereign of our skies; the queen of night, that walks in beauty along the starry plain of heaven, and the innumerable specks, that may be suns to other systems! When he reflects on the display of the Almighty power and wisdom, in the immutability of the laws which regulate the motions of every orb; the wonderful velocity of some planets, and the astonising precision of the complicated movements of the satellites or others, his faculties are

bound up in astonishment and delight; but every emotion of his heart is an act of silent homage to the Author of this stupendous mechanism. Though he advances to the threshold of the temple of celestial knowledge, he knows the precincts which human science cannot pass; reason tells him, these are my limits, "so far may I go, but no farther:" but he turns not away like the vain metaphysician, bewildered by fruitless speculations; for the voice of the spirit, that lives and breathes within him, encourages the hope that futurity will unveil the mysteries which now baffle the comprehension of science and philosophy. There glitters not a star above his head that is not an argument for his *immortality*; there is not a mystery he cannot solve that is not a motive for deserving *it*. And to the brightest luminary in the heavens, in the confidence of that immortality, he may say in the beautiful language of Campbell,

"This spirit shall return to him,
That gave its heavenly spark,
Yet think not, sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark!
No; it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine.
By him recalled to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
Who robbed the grave of victory,
And took the sting from death."

CHAPTER IX.

LONGEVITY OF JURISTS AND DRAMATISTS.

The lists of the law authors and the dramatists present a striking contrast in respect of age. Here we find a difference of one hundred and forty-six years. The gentlemen of the gown being so much longer lived than those of the sock and buskin. And here, again, the unfavourable influence of pursuits, in which imagination is largely exercised, is to be observed. Though law has occasionally to do with fiction, it is only in Ireland that it has to deal with fancy; so that the gentlemen of this profession have little to apprehend from the influence we have just spoken of: nevertheless, the result of this calculation in favour of the longevity is what we certainly did not expect. Generally speaking, no professional people have less salubrious countenances, or more of the sickly cast of thought in their complexions, than lawyers: and if Hygæia were to descend upon earth with the emblem of health in her right hand, in quest of half-a-dozen wholesome looking votaries, Westminster-hall is the

last place the daughter of Esculapius would think of visiting. That famous letter of Xilander, the lawyer, prefixed to the work of Plembius "De tuenda valetudine togatorum," has admirably described the ills and incommodities of that sort of life which the members of the legal profession generally lead. The work is so rare in this country, that we have been induced to transcribe the greater portion of the prefatory epistle. "I readily comply with your request, and willingly proceed to relate those infirmities and obstacles to health which seem most to follow the bustling life we lawyers are wont to lead, that you may be able to lay down for us more accurate rules and modes of managing our health, in the treatise you are about to publish on the disorders of the members of our profession.

"A country life is not only more agreeable but more healthful than that spent in town, in the discharge of public duties, which drag peculiar diseases after them. Stomachic and nephritic affections, and innumerable other ills that follow in their train, are the consequences of the sedentary habits of our city life. The source of all our disorders is easily traced; that which murders us is the constant sitting this is unavoidable in our professions; we sit whole days like lame cobblers, either at home or in the courts of justice; and

when the meanest fellow in the state is either exercising his body, or unbending his mind, we must be in the midst of wrangling disputations.

"Though the condition of all men too busily employed is miserable, yet are they most miserable who have not leisure to mind their own affairs. The torment of the constant babbling in the courts is pleasantly set forth in that old play, where one complains to Hercules,—'You know what wretchedness I underwent when I was forced to hear the lawyers plead. Had you been compelled to listen to them, with all your courage you would rather have wished yourself employed in cleansing the Augean stable."

"It is an ugly custom we have brought into use of getting into a coach every foot we have to go: if we did but walk the fourth part of the distance that we ride in a day, the evils of our sedentary habits might be greatly obviated by such exercise. But the world is come to this pass, that we seem to have lost the use of our feet, and doubtless you will think it necessary to recommend our ancient method of perambulating.

"Martial thought it madness for a hale young man to walk through the town on the feet of a quadruped. Another of our disadvantages is, that our doors are beset continually by a crowd

of people. The most disputatious pettifoggers, and brawlers by profession, are ever teasing us with their outrageous jargon of the law. Now Seneca says a man cannot be happy in the midst of many people, for it fares with him as it does with a tranquil lake, which is generally disturbed by visitors.

"Another unseasonable annoyance of ours, is to be interrupted in our meals by business; and Hippocrates condemns all study soon after meals, especially in those of a bad digestion. So taken up are we—what with the contentions of our clients, our own incessant cogitations, and daily attendance in courts and chambers, that we have no leisure to unbend our mind or to act the part of plain simple men in private life, but are obliged to personate a certain character; for our profession obliges us to be constantly observant of our steps. But as the philosopher again remarks —'those who exist under a mask cannot be said to lead pleasant lives,' for the pleasure of life consists in that open, sincere simplicity of mind and manner, that rather shuns than seeks observation.

"As for my way of living, it inclines to no extreme: a spare diet is perhaps fittest for the life we lead, for Celsus wrote not for us when he said, that men should eat much meat—though he

subjoins the caution—provided they can digest it. Though we are not great banquetters in general, yet sometimes we give way to jollity in company, and mingle our wisdom with wine, without observing the nice limits of sobriety. But how far these things are to be allowed or avoided; how far it may be advisable to exercise the body, to correct the evils of repletion, to walk in the free air to expand the chest with plentiful breathings; how far it may be necessary occasionally to change scene or climate to renovate our strength and spirits—these are things in which we expect to be directed by your wisdom. Truly, it is most reasonable to advise us to take air and exercise, and to recreate our minds: holidays were set apart by public authority for that purpose. But we are like slaves, who have no remission from labour; on some festivals, indeed, we alternate our toil, but we do not lay it aside; we must attend to business in some shape or other, whether in listening to depositions abroad, or in giving opinions at home; we are like the persons described by Euripides—we are the slaves of the public, and our lives are in the hands of the people.

"Let us profit by the melancholy example of those who have tarried too long on the bench, or at the bar; and as years gain on us let us

contract our toils, and secure an honest retreat for our old age, for its latter days are the lawyer's only holidays. In proper time, let us bid our long farewell to the bench and to the court.

"The first and middle terms of existence we sacrifice to the public—why should we not bestow the latter on ourselves? Let us take in due time the counsel of the Roman:—Pack up our awls at the approach of old age—and having lived in straits the greater portion of our days, let us die in harbour."

Such is the Sieur Xilander's account of the toils of the profession of which he was a distinguished member. But with all its labours, we find that our list of eminent lawyers indicates a length of life considerably greater than that of the imaginative pursuits of the poets, dramatists, novelists, and musical composers.

The distinction has been made between dramatists and poets, because the most numerous instances of advanced age are found amongst the former. The toils of the dramatist and those of the general poet are of a very different character: every dramatist, indeed, must be a poet, but many of the greatest poets have proved very indifferent dramatists. The list of the latter gives an amount of one hundred and five years more than the poets, and that of the dramatists

two hundred and fifty-five years less than the natural philosophers. Though the difficulty of succeeding in this branch of poetry is infinitely greater than in any other, and imagination in no small degree is essential to its successful cultivation, it is still to a happy combination of other qualities, and the exercise of other and more sober faculties, that this art is indebted for success. The business of the dramatist is to realize the images of fancy, to clothe the airy conceptions of poetry in the garb of real life.

The aim of tragedy is to give breath and animation to exalted sentiments, to bring the dim shadows of imagination into being, and give to legendary exploits the vivid character of actual events. The office of Comedy, on the other hand, is to catch the living manners as they rise, to place the peculiarity of national character in their strongest light, to make the follies of the time the food of wit, and in the correction of malevolent absurdity to make ridicule do that for which reason may not be appealed to. In a word, to mingle mirth with morals, "to hold the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own image, vice her own deformity, the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure."

That the labours of dramatic composition have not the same depressing influence on the energies

of life as those of the other branches of poetry, may be inferred from the astonishing fertility of dramatic invention, and likewise of the longevity of many of its authors. Lope de Vega is said to have written eighteen hundred pieces for the theatre; forty-seven quarto volumes of his works are extant, twenty-five of which are composed of dramas; he died of hypochondria in his seventy-third year; and little is it to be wondered at, that the literary malady should have closed the career of so voluminous an author. Goldoni wrote two hundred plays, which are published in thirty-one octavo volumes. Had Shakspeare attained the age of Goldoni, he would probably have been as prolific an author;—thirty-seven dramas have immortalized his short career, and these productions have to boast of a fate which those of no other dramatist, ancient or modern, ever met with. After an interval of two hundred years, five-and-twenty of his pieces still keep possession of the stage.

CHAPTER X.

LONGEVITY OF MEDICAL AUTHORS, AND MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS.

The amount of the united ages of the medical authors exceeds that of the novelists and essayists by one hundred and twelve years; and here again, the authors "of imagination all compact" are found very nearly at the bottom of the list, while those, into whose pursuits imagination little enters, in point of longevity rank high above them. It may be truly said, without any hyperbole, that every pursuit which ennobles the mind, has a tendency to invigorate the body, and by its tranquilizing influence, to add to the duration of life.

That study which carries the contemplation of its followers to the highest regions of philosophy, we have already seen is the pursuit, of all others, the most conducive to longevity. But the mechanism of the heavens is only more wonderful than that of the human form, because the magnitude of the scale on which the movements of that mechanism are carried on, require the greatest

effort which the mind is capable of making, even imperfectly to conceive. But what is there more wonderful in the laws which regulate the motions of innumerable worlds, than that principle of life which animates the dust of which one human being is compounded? What is there more stupendous in the idea of the power that gives precision, velocity, and effulgence to the swiftest and the brightest of those orbs, than in the conception of that power, which bestows the spirits of vitality and the attribute of reason on man. Infinite wisdom is only differently displayed; it matters not how, whether in the revolutions of the planets, or the circulation of the blood, in the transmission of solar light and heat, or in the mechanism of the eye, or the sensibility of the nerves, the inquiring mind is ultimately carried to the same creative power. But above all philosophers, to the medical observer what a miracle of wisdom is the formation of the human body, and the wonderful faculties superadded to its organization! "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties; In form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!" In a word, the tendency of the pursuits of the physician is to enlarge his understanding,

and to enlighten his views on every subject to which they are directed.

The list of miscellaneous writers is equally divided between the novelist and essayist. The former, whom we may consider as the regular practitioners of literature, appear to enjoy a greater length of days than their periodical brethren who cannot boast the voluminous dignity of the acknowledged novelist. The result, however, shows that the compulsory toil of periodical composition has a greater influence on health than voluntary labours to a far greater amount. This opinion is corroborated by an observation of Dr. Johnson, no mean authority on any subject connected with literary history. "He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease; he will labour on a barren topic till it is too late to change it; for in the ardor of invention, his thoughts become diffused into a wild exuberance which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce." There is, indeed, no labour more destructive to health, than that of periodical literature, and in no species of mental application, or even of manual employment, is the wear

and tear of mind and body so early and so severely felt. The readers of those light articles which appear to cost so little labour in the various literary publications of the day, are little aware how many constitutions are broken down in the service of their literary taste.

But with the novelist, it is far different; they have their attention devoted, perhaps for months, to one continued subject, and that subject neither dry nor disagreeable. They have no laborious references to make to other books, they have to burthen their memories with no authorities for their opinions, nor to trouble their brain with the connexion of any lengthened chain of ratiocination. They have but to knock at the door of their imagination to call forth its phantasies, and if the power of genius is present, "to collect, combine, amplify, and animate" the ideas these phantasies suggest; which, after all, are the creations of that faculty "without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert." To weave these phantasies into fiction, to call new worlds of imaginary being into existence, to endow an Anastasius or a Corinne with thoughts that breathe and words that burn, to picture a Rebecca, gazing from her dizzy casement on the tide of battle rolling beneath the castle walls, to bring the very spot to the mind's eye, where "death has

broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse;"—to invest the soldier of the cross, in his panoply of steel: like Cervantes to carry the exaltation of knight-errantry to the extremest very of credible absurdity, to array it against windmills; to couch the lance of the cavalier, and send his gallant steed against an army of soldadoes, or a flock of sheep, or to give the shadowy forms of mental entrancement a spiritualized being, made up of beauty and romance, or of baleful passions—a Flora M'Ivor or a haggard Elspeth:—this is the business of the novelist, and it must be allowed no unpleasing occupation is it.

So far as the labour we delight in physics pain, pleasant unquestionably it is, but light and amusing as it may seem, still is it laborious.

The author of the Rambler has justly observed, it is no unpleasing employment "to write when one sentiment readily produces another, and both ideas and expression present themselves at the first summons; but such happiness the greatest genius does not always attain, and common writers know it only to such a degree as to credit its possibility." In fact, there is no man, however great his powers, to whom extensive composition is not a serious labour; and in fiction, those productions, like Sterne's, which seem to be the very

outpourings of the mind, are generally those which cost the greatest effort.

The most accurate observer of nature, is generally the most painful thinker; the deepest thinker is seldom the best talker; and he whose memory draws least on his own imagination, (paradoxical as it may seem,) is often the most fluent writer. "Those animals," says Bacon, "which are the swiftest in the course are nimblest in the turn."

But the great evil of every department of literature which deals in fiction, is the habit the imagination acquires of domineering over sober judgment.

"In time," says the great moralist, "when some particular train of ideas has fixed the attention, all other intellectual gratifications are rejected, the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood, whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed. She grows first imperious, and in time despotic. Then fiction begins to operate as reality, false opinions fasten on the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or anguish."

Such is the progress, but its origin is in the infatuation of the pursuits which draws him into

labour beyond his strength, and causes a prolonged application to composition, because the interest of the subject renders the mind insensible to fatigue. Scott seldom exceeded fifteen pages a day, but even this for a continuance was a toilsome task, that would have broken down the health of any other constitution at a much earlier period. Byron, in his journal, says he wrote an entire poem, and one of considerable length, in four days, to banish the dreadful impression of a dream—an exertion of mind and body which appears almost incredible.

Pope boasts in one of his letters of having finished fifty lines of his "Homer" in one day; and it would appear to be the largest number he had accomplished.

Cowper, however, in his blank verse translation of the same author, for some time was in the habit of doing sixty lines a day; and even in his last illness, of revising one hundred lines daily. But of all literary labour that of Johnson appears the most stupendous. "In seven years," to use his own language, "he sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language," and in that brief term produced his dictionary. The similar French performance occupied forty academicians nearly as many years.

During the period that Johnson was thus employed, he found leisure to produce his tregedy,

to complete the "Rambler," the "Vanity of Human Wishes," and several minor performances. At the later period, he speaks of having written forty-eight octavo pages of the "Life of Savage" in one day, and a part of the night.

Such labours as these, if they do not shorten life, are calculated to make it wretched, for hypochondria invariably follows close upon them.

CHAPTER XI.

LONGEVITY OF POLEMICAL AUTHORS—PHILOLOGISTS.

In the list of polemical authors we find the longevity of those of fixed opinions on the subject of religion greater, by a hundred and five years, than that of authors of unsettled sentiments on this important inquiry after truth. The only wonder is, that the ages of the former have not furnished a still larger amount, when the different effects on health and life are taken into account, of certainty of opinion on the most important of all subjects: of tranquillity and peace of mind on the one hand; and on the other, of inquiries that present difficulties, doubts, or disbelief—of mental anxiety, and of the insecurity of the virtue of those whose sole dependance is on worldly honour, whose only guidance is the philosophy of men as fallible as themselves.

The list of the philologists exhibits very little difference from that of the divines in the amount of the united ages of each. Though many of the former have been devoted solely to scholastic

pursuits, these pursuits to a great extent are necessary to qualify the latter for their profession. But seclusion from the world, and sedentary habits, can alone enable the philologist to make his memory the store-house of the erudition of past ages, or furnish the necessary materials for that vast pyramid of classical erudition, which is based on a catacomb of ancient learning, and has its apex in a cloud that sheds no rain on the arid soil beneath it.

The more we contemplate so wonderful a structure, the greater must be our disappointment if we fail to discover its utility, and the larger the surface over which its shadows are projected, the more must be questioned the advantages of the erroneous expenditure of time and labour that was necessary for the erection of such a pile. If Cobbett should ever deign to peruse these volumes, he will pardon our metaphor for the sake of its application; but none can be more sensible of the misfortune of entitling an opinion of the inutility of any branch of learning to the approbation of that gentleman than we are; but, nevertheless, we are inclined to question the advantage of a whole life's devotion to the study of the dead languages.

What good to science, or to society, has accrued from Parr's profound knowledge of the di-

alects of Greece? What original works, even on the subject of his own pursuit, have issued from his pen? A few tracts and sermons, and a new edition of "Bellendenus," are his only title to the remembrance of the next age.

Languages are but the avenues of learning, and he who devotes his attention to the formation of the pebbles that lay along the road, will have little leisure for the consideration of more important objects, whose beauty or utility arrest the attention of the general observer.

We have been carried away from the subject of the effects of sedentary habits to which the pursuits that are carried on in cloisters of ancient learning are apt to lead; but in truth, there remained little to be said on the subject. If such habits appear less injurious to health in this branch of study than might have been expected, it is only because memory and not imagination, industry and not enthusiasm, have to do with the pursuits of the philologist.

CHAPTER XII.

LONGEVITY OF MUSICAL COMPOSERS, SCULPTORS, AND PAINTERS.

FINALLY, we have to observe the extraordinary difference in the longevity of the musical composers, and that of the artists. We find the amount of life in the list of the sculptors and painters larger, by one hundred and twenty-eight years, than in that of the votaries of Euterpe.

Music is to sensibility what language is to poetry, the mode of expressing enthusiastic sentiments, and exciting agreeable sensations. The more imagination the composer is able to put into his music, the more powerfully he appeals to the feelings. Sensibility is the soul of music, and pathos its most powerful attribute.

Pythagoras imagined that music was the soul of life itself, or that harmony was the sum total of the faculties, and the necessary result of the concert of these faculties, and of the bodily functions.

Musical composition, then, demands extraordinary sensibility, an enthusiastic imagination,

an instinctive taste rather than deep thought. The same qualities differently directed make the poet. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that we should find the poets and the musical composers considerably shorter lived than the followers of all other learned or scientific pursuits, whose sensibility is not exercised by their studies, whose imaginations are not wearied by excessive application and enthusiasm? The term "*genus irritabile*" deserves to be transferred from the poetical to the musical tribe; for we take it that an enraged musician is a much more common spectacle than an irritated bard, and infinitely more rabid in his choler.

Generally speaking, musicians are the most intolerant of men to one another, the most captious, the best humoured when flattered, and the worst tempered at all other times. Music, like laudânum, appears to soothe the senses when used in moderation, but the continual employment of either flurries and excites the faculties, and often renders the best natured men in the world, petulant, irritable, and violent.

In the list of artists the sculptors and painters have been placed apart for the purpose of showing the greater longevity of the former. The united ages of both exceed the poet's amount of life by no less than three hundred and thirty-two years—an

ample indication of the difference of the influence of the imaginative and the imitative art on health. Many, we are aware, think that imagination enters as largely into the pursuits of painting as into poetry. But, if such were the case, sculpture might indulge in the vagaries and chimeras of fancy without being obliged to have recourse to the centaurs and satyrs of poetry for its monsters, and painting might not have had to borrow its most beautiful subjects from the fervid description of Madonnas and Magdalens in the monkish records of the middle ages. It has been truly observed by an intelligent traveller, that "what the ancient poets fancied in verse, the sculptors formed in marble; what the priests invented afterwards in their cells, the painters have perpetuated on canvass. And thus the poetic fiction and the sacerdotal miracle—the ancient fable and the modern legend, by the magic influence of the chisel and the pencil, are handed down from age to age." A vivid perception of all that is sublime and beautiful in imagination is essential to the artist; but it does not follow because Hogarth had an excellent perception of the ridiculous, that nature had endowed him with the comic talent of a Liston. The elements of painting are said to be, invention, design, colouring, and disposition. But, if invention implies here original creative

power, independent of the imagery of nature and poetry, or of events detailed in history, the term is erroneously applied. The sublimest effort of pictorial art that can be adduced in favour of the received opinion of the inventive genious of painting, is that wonderful picture of the Last Judgment, by Michael Angelo. But the majesty and glory, the terror and despair, that are depicted in it, are not invented, but embodied. The original of each outline is in the Sacred History, and our wonder is not more at the execution of such a design than at the boldness of the genius that had the courage to undertake it. Imagination is the power the artist is least necessitated to call into action; judgment is the master excellence which is requisite to regulate and direct the minor qualities that are given by nature, or acquired by experience. "Good sense and experience," says Burke, "acting together, find out what is fit to be done in every work of art." Painting, in a word, is the adaption of poetry to the eye, the concentration of natural imagery—the skilful combination, in a limited space, of the idea of infinity, with the perception of objects that are visible at a glance. Many of the ancient painters, it is true were tolerable poets. Michael Angelo and Salvator Rosa were good ones; but it does not follow that imagination is essential to the

production of art. Some of the most eminent lawyers wrote excellent verses. Sir Thomas More, Jones, Blackstone, Erskine, and Curran, had considerable talents for poetry. But poetry has very little to do with law; neither has it with chemistry, and yet Sir Humphry Davy has left effusions of this kind behind him which would not be discreditable to any bard.

We may conclude with Goethe, "there is a difference between the art of painting and that of writing; their bases may touch each other, but their summits are distinct and separate." And from the lists that have been noticed of the painters and poets, we have seen there is a wide difference between the influence of an imitative art and an imaginative pursuit, on health.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF MEN OF GENIUS.

Though to the moralist it is of much less importance how a man dies than how he lives, it is nevertheless a matter of more than curiosity to inquire how far the words and actions, the theoretical philosophy and the practical conduct of men correspond in their last moments. In such moments, what influence has mental cultivation on the conduct of individuals? Or, is there indeed any perceptible difference between the bearing of the cultivated and uncultivated mind in the last scene of all? Generally speaking, the influence of literature and science over the mind and the demeanor of men, is at no period displayed to such advantage as at that of the close of life. What medical man has attended at the death-bed of the scholar, or the studious man, and has not found death divested of half its terrors by the dignified composure of the sufferer, and his state one of peace and serenity, compared with the abject condition of the unenlightened mind in the same extremity? Those, perhaps, who re-

linquish life with the most reluctance, paradoxical as it may appear to be, are to be found in the most opposite grades of society—those in the very highest and lowest walks of life. In different countries, likewise, it is singular in what different degrees people are influenced by the fear of eternity, and in what different ways the pomp of death, the peculiar mode of sepulture, reasonable views of religion, and terrifying superstitions affect the people of particular countries. The Irish, who are certainly not deficient in physical courage, support bodily suffering, and encounter death, with less fortitude than the people of this country. A German entertains his fate, in his dying moments, more like a philosopher than a Frenchman. And, of all places in the world, the capital of Turkey is it, where we have seen death present the greatest terrors, and where life has been most unwillingly resigned. The Arabs, on the other hand, professing the same religion as the Turks, differ from them wholly in this respect, and meet death with greater indifference than the humbler classes of any other country, Mahomedan or Christian. It is truly surprising with what apathy an Arab, in extremity, will lay him down to die, and with what pertinacity the Turk will cling to life—with what abject importunity he will solicit the physician to save and preserve him.

In various epidemics in the East, we have had occasion to observe the striking difference in the conduct of both in their last moments, and especially in the expedition of Ibrahim Pasha to the Morea, when hundreds were dying daily in the camp at Suda. There the haughty Moslem went to the society of his celestial houries like a miserable slave, while the good humoured Arab went like a hero to his long last home. The difference in their moral qualities, and the mental superiority the Egyptian over the Turk, made all the distinction.

The result of the observation of many a closing scene in various climes, leads to the conclusion that death is envisaged by those with the least horror, whose lives have been least influenced by superstition or fanaticism, as well as by those who have cultivated literature and science with the most ardour. "Of the great number," says Sir Henry Halford, in his Essay on Death, to whom it has been my painful professional duty to have administered in the last hours of their lives, I have sometimes felt surprised that so few have appeared reluctant to go to "the undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns."

And probably, were it not for the adventitious terrors which are given to death—for all the

frightful paraphernalia of the darkened chamber, the hideous vesture of the corpse, the lugubrious visages of 'the funeral performers,' the solemn mutes who 'mimic sorrow when the heart's not sad,' and all the frightful 'pomp and circumstance' of death—the sable pall, the waving plumes;—were it not for these, and the revolting custom of heightening the horrors of sepulture, the formal mode of doing violence to the feelings of the friends who stand over the grave, death might be divested of half its terrors, and its approach even hailed as a blessing by the majority of mankind—by those, at least, who are weary of the world, whatever portion of it they may be. Is it not Johnson who has said, there is probably more pain in passing from youth to age, than from age to eternity?

Professor Hufeland, whose observations on this subject are worth all the essays that have lately obtained a temporary notoriety, and that too without any classical clap-traps or shreds and patches of ancient scholarship, has well observed in his work on longevity, "that many fear death less than the operation of dying. People (he says) form the most singular conception of the last struggle, the separation of the soul from the body, and the like. But this is all void of foundation. No man certainly ever felt what death is; and as

insensibly as we enter into life, equally insensible do we leave it. The beginning and the end are here united. My proofs are as follows. First, man can have no sensation of dying; for, to die, means nothing more than to lose the vital power, and it is the vital power which is the medium of communication between the soul and body. In proportion as the vital power decreases, we lose the power of sensation and of consciousness; and we cannot lose life without at the same time, or rather before, losing our vital sensation, which requires the assistance of the tenderest organs. We are taught also by experience, that all those who ever passed through the first stage of death, and were again brought to life, unanimously asserted that they felt nothing of dying, but sunk at once into a state of insensibility."

"Let us not be led into a mistake by the convulsive throbs, the rattling in the throat, and the apparent pangs of death, which are exhibited by many persons when in a dying state. These symptoms are painful only to the spectators, and not to the dying, who are not sensible of them. The case here is the same as if one, from the dreadful contortions of a person in an epileptic fit, should form a conclusion respecting his internal feelings: from what affects us so much, he suffers nothing."

"Let one always consider life, as it really is, a mean state, which is not an object itself, but a medium for obtaining an object, as the multifarious imperfections of it sufficently prove; as a period of trial and preparation, a fragment of existence, through which we are to be fitted for, and transmitted to, other periods. Can the idea, then of really making this transition—of ascending to another from this mean state, this doubtful problematical existence, which never affords complete satisfaction, ever excite terror? With courage and confidence we may, therefore, resign ourselves to the will of that Supreme Being, who, without our consent, placed us upon this sublunary theatre, and give up to his management the future direction of our fate."

"Remembrance of the past, of that circle of friends who were nearest and always will be dearest to our hearts, and who, as it were, now smile to us with a friendly look of invitation from that distant country beyond the grave, will also tend very much to allay the fear of death."

There is one point connected with this subject —the brightening up of the mind previously to dissolution; or, to use the common expression, "the lightness before death,"—on which a few words remain to be said. The notion that dying people were favoured beyond others with a spirit-

ualized conception of things not only relating to time, but likewise to eternity, was familiar to the ancients, and was probably borrowed by the Jews from the Egyptians, amongst whose descendants the words and wishes of a dying man are still regarded as manifestations of a spirit of wisdom that has risen superior to the weaknesses and passions of humanity. The doctrine, however, shared the fate of all similar opinions that are specious without being solid, and entertaining without being true: it was forgotton till revived by Aretæus; and from his time to that of Sir H. Halford, millions of people were born and buried, and no indications of a prophetic spirit exhibited by the dying, or recorded of them, till the learned baronet produced his Essay on the subject. In truth, this lighting up of the mind amounts to nothing more than a pleasurable excited condition of the mental faculties, following perhaps a state of previous torpor, and continuing a few hours, or oftentimes moments, before dissolution. This rousing up of the mind is probably produced by the stimulus of dark venous blood circulating through the arterial vessels of the brain, in consequence of the imperfect oxygenation of the blood in the lungs, whose delicate air-cells become impeded by the deposition of mucus on the surface, which there is not sufficient energy in the absorbents to re-

move, and hence arises the rattling in the throat which commonly precedes death.*

The effect of this new stimulus of dark coloured blood in the arterial vessels, appears strongly to resemble the exhilerating effects of opium, inasmuch as physical pain is lulled, the sensations soothed, and the imagination exalted. Long forgotten pleasures are recalled, old familiar faces are seen in the mind's eye, and well remembered friends are communed with, and the imaginative power of giving a real presence to the shadowy reproductions of memory is busily employed, and a sort of delerium, or rather of mental exaltation, is the consequence, in which a rapid succession of ideas, in most instances apparently of an agreeable nature, pass through the mind, and the sense of bodily pain, to all appearance is wholly overpowered. These phenomena were, perhaps, never more strikingly exhibited than in the case of the late Mr. Salt. The last three or four days of his life his mind seemed to have regained all its former activity. He spoke in various languages to his attendants, some of which, as the Amharic, he had not used for many years; he composed some

* In the Quarterly Review for April, the explanation of the phenomena here glanced at is sensibly and intelligibly given, and may be referred to with advantage for larger information on this subject.

verses that referred to his previous sufferings, and repeated them with great energy to the friend who accompanied him. The prophetic spirit which in some degree is supposed, by the authors we have alluded to, to be attained by the dying, was likewise aimed at, though not attained in this instance—for poor Salt frequently predicted that he should die on a Thursday, but the prediction was not accomplished.

Some of the following brief accounts of the closing scene of men of genius, may tend to illustrate the preceding observations, and to show how far a predominant passion or favourite pursuit may influence the mind even at the latest hour of life. In nearly every instance, "the ruling passion strong in death" is found to be displayed.

Rousseau, when dying, ordered his attendants to place him before the window, that he might once more behold his garden, and bid adieu to nature.

Addison's dying speech to his son-in-law was characteristic enough of the man, who was accustomed to inveigh against the follies of mankind, though not altogether free from some of the frailties he denounced. "Behold," said he to the dissolute young nobleman, "with what tranquillity a Christian can die!"

Roscommon uttered at the moment he expired, two lines of his own version of "Dies iræ."

Hallar died feeling his pulse, and when he found it almost gone, turning to his brother physician, said, "My friend, the artery ceases to beat," and died.

Petrarch was found dead in his library, leaning on a book.

Bead died in the act of dictating.

Herder closed his career writing an ode to the Deity, his pen on the last line.

Waller died repeating some lines of Virgil.

Metastasio, who would never suffer the word death to be uttered in his presence, at last so far triumphed over his fears, that, after receiving the last rites of religion, in his enthusiasm he burst forth into a stanza of religious poetry.

Lucan died reciting some of his own Pharsallia.

Alfieri, the day before he died, was persuaded to see a priest; and when he came, he said to him with great affability, "Have the kindness to look in to-morrow—I trust death will wait four-and-twenty-hours."

Napoleon, when dying, and in the act of speaking to the clergyman, reproved his sceptical physician for smiling, in these words—"You are above those weaknesses, but what can I do? I am neither a philosopher nor a physician; I believe in God, and am of the religion of my father. It is not every one who can be an atheist." The

last words he uttered——Head——Army—— evinced clearly enough what sort of visions were passing over his mind at the moment of dissolution.

Tasso's dying request to Cardinal Cynthia was indicative of the gloom which haunted him through life; he had but one favour, he said, to reqest of him, which was, that he would collect his works, and commit them to the flames, especially his Jerusalem Delivered.

Leibnitz was found dead in his chamber, with a book in his hand.

Clarendon's pen dropped from his fingers when he was seized with the palsy, which terminated his life.

Chaucer died ballad making. His last production he entitled, "A Ballad, made by Geoffry Chaucer on his death-bed, lying in great anguish."

Barthelemy was seized with death while reading his favourite Horace.

Sir Godfrey Kneller's vanity was displayed in his last moments. Pope, who visited him two days before he died, says he never saw a scene of so much vanity in his life; he was sitting up in his bed, contemplating the plan he was making for his own monument.

Wycherly, when dying, had his young wife brought to his bed-side, and having taken her hand

in a very solemn manner, said, he had but one request to make of her, and that was, that she would never marry an old man again. There is every reason to believe, though it is not stated in the account, that so reasonable a request could not be denied at such a moment.

"Bolingbroke," says Spence, "in his last illness desired to be brought to the table where we were sitting at dinner; his appearance was such that we all thought him dying, and Mrs. Arbuthnot involuntarily exclaimed, "This is quite an Egyptian feast." On another authority he is represented as being overcome by terrors and excessive passion in his last moments, and, after one of his fits of choler, being overheard by Sir Harry Mildmay complaining to himself, and saying, "What will my poor soul undergo for all these things?"

Keats, a little before he died, when his friend asked him how he did, replied in a low voice, "Better, my friend. I feel the daisies growing over me."

In D'Israeli's admirable work on "Men of Genius," from which some of the preceding accounts are taken, many others are to be found, tending to illustrate more forcibly, perhaps, than any of those instances we have given, the soothing, and,

if the word may be allowed, the benign influence of literary habits on the tranquillity of the individual in his last moments.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE IMPROVIDENCE OF LITERARY MEN.

If the misfortunes of men of genius were unconnected with their infirmities, any notice of them, however brief, would be irrelevant to the subject of these pages. In literature itself, there surely is nothing to favor improvidence, or to unfit men for the active duties of life; but in the habits which literary men contract from excessive application to their pursuits, there is a great deal to disqualify the studious man for those petty details of economy and prudence, which are essential to the attainment of worldly prosperity. "It is incongruous," says Burns, "'tis absurd to suppose that a man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at the sacred flame of poetry—a man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race, who soars above this little scene of things, can condescend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræ-filial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves." Poor Burns had evidently his own improvidence in view when he made this observation, but he must have been

the most simple-minded of bards if he expected to disarm the censure of the world by it. Its charity may sometimes extend to the eccentricities of genius, but seldom to the poverty that springs from its improvidence. The greatest explosion of periodical morality that we remember to have occurred for some years, took place in most of the newspapers of the day, not many months ago, on the occasion of the appearance of the life of a celebrated bard, in which the biographer had unfortunately spoken of the poetic temperament as one ill-calculated to favour the cultivation of the social and domestic ties. Many men of genius have unquestionably been every thing that men should be in all the relations of private life; therefore, with those outrageous moralists, there was no reason why all men of genius should not be patterns of excellence to all good citizens, husbands, fathers, and economical managers of private affairs. No reason can be given why they should not be such. We only know, that such the majority of them unfortunately are not; and, indeed, in the varied distribution of nature's gifts, when we generally find the absence of one excellence atoned for by the possession of another, it would be in vain to expect a combination of all such advantages in the same individual. Nature cannot afford to be so

profusely lavish even to her favourites. It is somewhat singular, that those instances of pre-eminent genius, accompanied by well regulated conduct and domestic virtues, which are adduced in opposition to the notion that the temparament of genius exerts an unfavourable influence on the habits of private life, are of persons who never took upon them the ties of husband or of fathers. And had they done so, who knows what their conduct might have been in these relations? Newton, Galileo, Michael Angelo, Locke, Hume, Pope, never married; neither did Bacon, Voltaire, and many other illustrious men, who either distrusted their own fitness for the married state, or were afraid to stake their tranquillity on the hazard of the matrimonial die.

Whatever doubt there may be, whether the man who lives *sibi et musis* in his study, and not in society, who communes with former ages, and not with the events which are passing around him, is eminently qualified for the duties and offices of married life, it cannot be denied that his habits, and the tendency of his pursuits, are ill-calculated to make him a provident or a thrifty man.

In all ages and in all countries, poverty has been the patrimony of the Muses. Johnson, Goldsmith, Fielding, and Butler, commenced their litterary

career in garrets, from which, no doubt, they had as unimpeded a prospect of the workhouse as the summits of Parnassus are said to afford. Even Addison wrote his Campaign in a garret in the Haymarket. Camoens died in an alms-house, and fifteen years afterwards had a splendid monument erected to his memory. It was with the poor man of genius in that day as the present: "And they who loathed his life, might gild his grave." Chatterton lies buried in Shoe-lane workhouse, and Otway expired in a pot-house. The Adventurer goes so far as to state, that not a favourite of the Muses, since the days of Amphion, was ever able to build a house. Poor Scott however, did more than build one, and the example is certainly not encouraging to authors.

But perhaps there is not another instance, even in this land of wealth, of an author by profession dwelling in a habitation of his own erection.

Burton ascribes the heedlessness of literary men, of their own affairs, and consequently their poverty, to the unhappy influence of the Muses' destiny. "When Jupiter's daughters," he says, "were all married to the gods, the Muses alone were left solitary, probably because they had no portions. Helicon was forsaken of all suitors, and Calliope only continued to be a maid, because she had no dower." Petronius, he narrates, knew

a scholar by the meanness of his apparel. "There came," saith he, "by chance into my company, a fellow not very spruce to look on, whom I could perceive by that note alone, to be a scholar, whom commonly all rich men hate. I asked him what he was? and he answered—a poet. I demanded, why he was ragged? he told me this kind of learning never made any man rich."

"All which our ordinary students," says Burton, "right well perceiving in the Universities, how unprofitable are these poetical and philosophical pursuits of theirs, applying themselves, in all haste, to more commodious and lucrative professions. They are no longer heedful of knowledge—he who can tell his money, hath arithmetic enough: he is a true geometrician, who can measure a good fortune to himself: a perfect astrologer, who can cast the rise and fall of others, and turn their errant motions to his own advantage: the best optician, who can reflect the beams of a great man's favour, and cause them to shine upon himself.

Æneas Sylvius says he knew many scholars in his time "excellent, well-learned men, but so rude, so silly, that they had no common civility, nor knew how to manage either their own affairs, or those of the public."

"They are generally looked down upon," con-

tinues Burton, "on account of their carriage, because they cannot ride a horse, which every clown can manage; salute and court a gentlewoman; carve properly at table; cringe and make congies, which every common swasher can do." They cannot truly vaunt much of their accomplishments in this way; they belong to that race, of one of whom Pliny gave the description—"He is yet a scholar; than which kind of men there is nothing so simple, so sincere, and none better."

But the miseries of Grub-street are no longer known: well-fed authors may be daily encountered in "the Row," and no writer of any repute perambulates the town, at least within a rood of Bond-street, in a thread-bare coat. In short, there is a general opinion that litterature has of late become a lucrative employment; that God mollified the hearts of booksellers—"hearts," which in by gone-times had "become like that of Leviathan, firm as a stone, yea, hard as a piece of nether mill-stone."

It is commonly imagined, that because it has become the fashion for people of rank to write books, there are no poor authors, no "patient merit" unrewarded in the metropolis—no unfortunate men of genius condemned to bear "the whips and scorns of the time," to hawk about

their intellectual wares from publisher to publisher, till they are tempted, like poor Collins, to consign them to the flames; to dance attendance on some bashaw of "the trade," who rubs his soft hands, while he is sifting, not the merit of the performance, but the politics and connexions of the author, and when he has duly ascertained that he is dealing with a man of the principles which every author who is a gentleman is supposed to profess, he then may be open to an offer for the work, and perhaps in as many weeks as days have been promised,—(and if the author is a very poor and modest man,) in as many months—the manuscript may be examined, and in all probability very civilly declined by one whose promises may have proved the bitter bread of disappointment, and who never may have known what it is to feel, that sickness of the heart which arises from hope deferred. Or perhaps the poor author may try his fate elsewhere, and his heart may die away within him, while he is kept waiting in an ante-room for the customary period of solitary confinement, that is sufficient to subdue the ardent expectations of an author, before he is admitted to the presence of "the great invisible." But when at length his form is revealed to the author's eye, emerging from a pile of fashionable publications, to be frozen to death by inches by the cold civility of his

smile, to be asked in "bated breath and bondsman key," for the nature of the influence that is to push the book, and in default of an aristocratic name, and a fashionable acquaintance, to be bowed like a mandarin to the outer door, is what he has to expect, and to be assured all the time that the work is a very good work in its way, but that authors who would be read, must have titles as well as their books, and that nothing short of a baronetcy will go down in a title-page.

If it be imagined there are no authors now-a-days, pining as in former times, in want and wretchedness, because their destitution is not so much obtruded on the public as it formerly was wont to be, little is the condition of a vast portion of the literary men of London known. Because shame may not allow them to parade their poverty before the eyes of their fellow-men in Regent Street or Hyde Park, because their seedy garments and attenuated forms are not to be seen in public places, forsooth they exist not!—alas! they are to be found elsewhere, and their familiar companions are still too frequently

> Pallentes morbi, luctus, curæque laborque
> Et metus, et malesuada fames, et turpis egestas
> Terribiles visu formæ.——

But it would be absurd, as well as unjust, to attribute the misfortunes of literary men to the con-

duct of those whose business it is to cater for the literary taste of the public. If authors have to complain, it is of the system on which the book trade is carried on, and not of the individuals who are employed in it: generally speaking, it must be acknowledged, men more liberal and more honourable are not to be met with.

It cannot be denied that literary men are too often desirous to cover their own imprudence by taxing the world with neglecting merit, by railing at Fortune for the blind distribution of her gifts. "Many of the English poets," says Goethe, "after spending their early years in folly and licentiousness, have afterwards thought themselves entitled to deplore the vanities of human life. It is unreasonable of those who have wholly devoted themselves to the acquisition of fame, and not of fortune, to expect the advantages that are solely in the latter's gift. Porson, in his embarrassment, thought it a hard case, that with all his Greek, he could not command a hundred pounds; and Burns, in his letters, whines about his poverty, as if he had expected, by the cultivation of poetry, to have amassed a fortune.

The most sensible observations we have ever seen on this subject, are those of a lady, whose reputation deservedly ranks high in the literary world, and such is their merit, that we may be

permitted to end this subject with their insertion.

"The poet complains of his poverty when he sees a rich booby wallowing in wealth, forgetting such wealth is acquired or retained by such paltry arts as he disdains to practice: if he refuses to pay the price, why expect the purchase? We should consider this world as a great mart of commerce, where wealth, ease, fame, and knowledge, are exposed to our view. Our industry and labour are so much ready money, which we are to lay out to the best advantage. Examine, choose, or reject the wares, but stand to your own judgment, and do not, like children, when you have purchased one thing, repine that you do not possess another, which you did not purchase. 'If you would be rich, you must put your heart against the Muses, and be content to feed your understanding with plain and household truths.' You must keep on in one beaten track, without turning to the right hand or to the left. 'But I cannot submit to drudgery like this—I feel a spirit above it.' 'Tis well to be above it then, only do not repine that you are not rich.

"'Is knowledge the pearl of price?' you see that too may be purchased by steady application, and long solitary hours of study and reflection. 'But,' says the man of letters, 'is it not a hardship that

many an illiterate fellow, who cannot construe the motto on his coach, shall raise a fortune, and make a figure, while I have little more than the common necessaries of life?'

"Was it in order to raise a fortune you consumed the sprightly hours of youth in study and retirement? Was it to be rich that you grew pale over the midnight lamp? You have then mistaken your path, and ill employed your industry. 'What reward have I then for all my labors?' What reward!—A large comprehensive soul, well purged from vulgar fears, and perturbations, and prejudices, able to interpret the works of man and God. A rich, flourishing, cultivated mind, pregnant with inexhaustable stores of entertainment and reflection. A perpetual spring of fresh ideas, and the conscious dignity of superiour intelligence. Good heavens! and what reward can you ask beside?

"If a mean dirty fellow should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation, is it a reproach upon the economy of Providence? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his conscience, his liberty for it, and will you envy him his bargain? Will you hang your head and blush in his presence, because he out shines you in show and equipage? Lift your head

with a noble confidence, and say to yourself, 'I have not these things, it is true; but it is because I have not sought them; it is because I posses something better. I have chosen my lot; I am content and satisfied.'"

CHAPTER XV.

APPLICATON OF THE PRECEDING OBSERVATIONS.

The history of men of genius affords abundant proof that the habits of literary men are unfavourable to health, and that constant application to those studies, whose acknowledged tendency is to exhalt the intellect, and to enlarge the faculties of the mind, are nevertheless productive of consequences similar to those which arise from physical infirmities. "The conversation of a poet," says Goldsmith, "is that of a man of sense, while his actions are those of a fool."

There is no reason why folly should emanate from poetry; but we have reason enough to know that many mental infirmities arise from sedentary habits and their accompanying evils; yet in the face of modern biography, it requires a little courage to assert that bodily disease has an influence over the feelings, temper, or sensibility of studious men, and that it gives a colour to character, which it is often impossible to discriminate by any other light than that of medical philosophy. In the following pages we propose to illustrate this

opinion, by referring to the lives of a few of those individuals, the splendor of whose career has brought not only their frailties, but their peculiarities into public notice, and by pointing out, in each instance, those deviations from health which deserve to be taken into account in fairly considering the literary character.

The most frequent disorders of literary men are dyspepsia and hypochondria, and in extreme cases the termination of these maladies is in some cerebral disorder, either mania, epilepsy, or paralysis, and these we intend to notice in order of their succession in the following brief sketches of the physical infirmaties of Pope, Johnson, Burns, Cowper, Byron, and lastly, Scott, in whose case the absence of the ordinary errors of genius, may be ascribed in a great measure to well regulated habits, which certainly were not those of the others above mentioned.

POPE.

For about three-quarters of a century the public laboured under the delusion that Pope was a poet, and moreover a man of tolerable morals, till

an amiable clergyman, instigated no doubt by the most laudable motives, took upon himself to disabuse the world of its error, and to pull down the reputation of Homer's translator from the eminence it had undeservedly attained. It was an adventurous task, and one which required a mind fraught with all the fervour of literary controversy, and actuated solely by an honest detestation of false pretensions and flagrant imposition. He had to invalidate the title of an impostor to literary immortality; he had to impugn the character of a man who is supposed to have had some virtues, and whose failings had unfortunately been almost forgotton; and verily, the task was performed with signal intrepidity, though not perhaps with complete success. A troublesome opponent took the field in defence of a brother bard's disparaged fame, and he laid about him like one who was accustomed to spare no critic in his rage, and no reviewer in his anger.

The distinction of being attacked by such an adversary was the only advantage to be gained by the contest; but this advantage was purchased at the expense of considerable punishment. The controversy was a hot one, and the fame of the individual who was the subject of the quarrel had to pass through the ordeal of fire; but phœnix-like, the character of the poet rose triumphant from the

flames, albeit the conduct of the man came forth, not altogether unscathed by the conflagration.—Not even Byron's genius could rescue the memory of Pope from the obloquy of the long-forgotten errors that had been raked up by the indefatigable industry of his opponent; for in attempting to palliate those errors, the bodily infirmities of the victim of the controversy were overlooked, and no satisfactory explanation was given of that peevishness of temper, and waywardness of humour, which unquestionably tarnished the character of this favourite—we had almost said, this spoiled child of genius.

The following references to his habits and temperament may probably throw some little light on the nature of his failings, and tend even to remove the impression which the animadversions of Mr. Bowles may have produced. "By natural deformity, or accidental distortion," we are told by Johnson, "the vital functions of Pope were so much disordered, that his life was a long disease." The deformity alluded to arose from an affection of the spine, contracted in infancy, and to which the extreme delicacy of his constitution is to be attributed.

When it is recollected that the nerves which supply the abdominal viscera with the energy that is essential to their functions, are derived from the

spinal column, the cause of the disorder of his digestive powers during the whole of his life is easily conceived. As he advanced in life the original complaint ceased to make any further progress, and its effects on his constitution might have been removed by due attention to regimen and exercise; but instead of these, active medicines and stimulating diet were the means he constantly employed of temporarily palliating the exhaustion, and obviating the excitement consequent on excessive mental application. None of his biographers, indeed allude to his having suffered from indigestion; and it is even possible that he might not have been himself aware of the nature of those anomalous symptoms of dyspepsia, which mimic the form of every other malady; those symptoms of giddiness, languor, dejection, palpitation of the heart, constant headache, dimness of sight, occasional failure of the mental powers, exhaustion of nervous energy, depriving the body of vital heat, and the diminution of muscular strength, without a corresponding loss of flesh, he frequently complains of; and every medical man is aware, that they are the characteristic symptoms of dyspepsia.

One patient calls his disorder spleen, another nervousness, another melancholy, another irritability: the medical nomenclature is no less prolific, but all their titles are for a single malady

and "not one of them," says Dr. James Johnson, in his admirable treatise on the 'Morbid Sensibility of the Stomach,' "expresses the real nature of the malady, but only some of its multiform symptoms. Of all these designations, indigestion has been the most hacknied title, and it is, in my opinion, the most erroneous. The very worst forms of the disease—forms in which the body is tortured for years, and the mind ultimately wrecked, often exhibit no sign or proof of indigestion, in the ordinary sense of the word, the appetite being good, the digestion apparently complete."

The fact is, that where pain is not the character of the disease, the attention of the patient is carried to the symptoms in organs, perhaps, the remotest from the cause; and in this particular disorder, the patient is seldom or ever sensible of pain in the actual seat of it.

We are told by Pope's biographer, "that the indulgence and accommodation that his sickness required, had taught him all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valetudinary man." And in various other passages we are informed that he was irascible, capricious, peevish, and resentful; often wanton in his attacks, and unjust in his censures; that he delighted in artifice in his intercourse with mankind, so that he could hardly drink tea without a stratagem; that his cunning

sometimes descended to such petty parsimony as writing his compositions on the backs of letters, by which perhaps he might have saved five shillings in five years, (a crime against stationary, by the way, which he shared in common with Sir Walter Scott,) that although he occasionally gave a splendid dinner, and was enabled to do so on an income of about eight hundred a year, his entertainment was often scanty to his friends, and he was capable of setting a single pint upon the table, and saying to his guests when he retired, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine." We are told, moreover, that his satire had often in it more of petulance, personality, and malignity, than of moral design, or a desire to refine the public taste.

These are serious charges against the justice and amiability of his character; and probably there is a great deal of truth in them, but they only apply to his character, not to his disposition.

There is a paradox in the conduct of literary men, which makes it necessary to draw a distinction between their actions, and their sentiments, between the author with a pen in his hand, and the man without it; between the character that is formed by the world, and the disposition which is only known by private friends.

Johnson had pictured Pope as he really appear-

ed to the world; but Bolingbroke spoke of him when he was on his death-bed, not as he appeared to be, but as he knew him to have been, when he said to his weeping attendants,—"I have known him these thirty years; he was the kindest-hearted man in the world." Who knows under what paroxism of mental irritation of that disease which, more than any other, domineers over the feelings of the sufferer, he might have written those bitter sarcasms which he levelled against his literary opponents? Who knows in what moment of bodily pain his irascibility might have taken the form of unjustifiable satire, or his morbid sensibility assumed the sickly shape of petulance and peevishness? Who knows how the strength of the strong mind might have been cast down by his sufferings, when "he descended to the artifice" of imposing on a bookseller, and of "writing those letters for effect which he published by subterfuge?" Who, that has observed how the vacillating conduct of the dyspeptic invalid imitates the vagaries of this proteiform malady, can wonder at his capriciousness, or be surprised at the anomaly of bitterness on the tongue, and benevolence in the heart, of the same individual.

But Pope's biting sarcasm was only aimed at his enemies. Byron little cared whether friend or foe was the victim of his spleen; those he best

loved in the world were those who suffered most from the bitterness of his distempered feelings. To read those injurious lines on "Rogers," that have lately appeared, and which never ought to have been dragged into public notice, is to fancy the malignity of Byron greater even than Milton's, which (we are falsely told) was sufficient to make hell grow darker at its scowl.

But whose, in this instance, was the greater malignity of the two—the writer of productions, penned, in all probability, under the excitement of mental irritability and bodily infirmity, without a moment's forethought, or an aim, or an object, beyond the miserable gratification of seeing on paper the severest thing he could say of his best friend: an exercise of melancholy, to try how far poetic ingenuity could exaggerate the foibles of those he knew to be exempt from grave defects—written without premeditation, and never intended for publicity;—or the deep, deliberate malignity of the literary jackal, that panders to the rage of the noble-hearted lion, and then prowls about his lair, and steals away, when the creature sleeps, the provender of the mangled *disjectæ membri humanitatis*, for the "*omni vorantia et homicida gula*" of the savage community of his own species?

Who might not wish that "a whip were placed in every honest hand," to punish the offender, who

reckless of the feelings of the living, and regardless of the fame and honour of the dead, dragged those effusions into light which were born in the obscurity of the study, and never meant to be sent beyond its precincts? No malignity is comparable to his, for whom there is no sanctity in the grave, in friendship no respect, and no restraint on the pen that perpetuates a slander that had otherwise been forgotten!

But what have the failings of Lord Byron, or the perfidy of his friends, to do with our subject? —little more indeed, than to break up the monotony of the task of recording the infirmities of his brother bard. That these had their origin in his dyspeptic malady, we have little doubt.

"From numerous facts," says Dr. James Johnson, "which have come within my own observation, I am convinced that many strange antipathies disgusts, caprices of temper, and eccentricities, which are considered solely as obliquities of the intellect, have their source in corporeal disorder.

"The great majority of those complaints which are considered as purely mental, such as irascibility, melancholy, timidity, and irresolution, might be greatly remedied, if not entirely removed by a proper system of temperance, and with very little medicine. There is no accounting for the magic-like spell, which annihilates for

a time the whole energy of the mind, and renders the victim of dyspepsia afraid of his own shadow, or of things, if possible, more unsubstantial than shadows.

"It is not likely that the great men of the earth should be exempt from these visitations any more than the little: and if so, we may reasonably conclude that there are other things besides 'conscience' which 'make cowards of us all;' and that by a temporary gastric irritation many an 'enterprize of vast pith and moment' has had 'its current turned away,' and 'lost the name of action.'

"The philosopher and the metaphysician, who know but little of these reciprocities of mind and matter, have drawn many a false conclusion from, and erected many a baseless hypothesis on, the actions of men. Many a happy thought has sprung from an empty stomach: many a terrible and merciless edict has gone forth in consequence of an irritated gastric nerve.

"Thus health," continues the author we have just quoted, "may make the same man a hero in the field, whom dyspepsia may render imbecile in the cabinet."

It was under the influence of this malady that Pope's better judgment was occasionally warped, and that his feelings, for the time, swayed to and

fro with his infirmities. On no other supposition can the anomalies in his character be reconciled. Both of his early biographers admit that his writings, especially his letters, were at variance with his conduct; they exhibit, we are told by Johnson, a distaste of life, a contempt of death, a perpetual and unclouded effulgence of general benevolence and particular affection; "but it is easy," he adds, "to despise death, when there is no danger, and to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given."

But surely it is not so very heinous an offence against the epistolary statute of sincerity, to "assume a virtue," even "when we have it not;" and Johnson, himself, even questioned the truth of the common opinion, that "he who writes to his friend, lays his bosom open before him." Very few, he says, "can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves; and, certainly, what we hide from ourselves we do not show to our friends. In the eagerness of conversation the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered, but a friendly letter is a calm, deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude; and surely no man sits down to depreciate, by design, his own character. By whom can a man wish to be thought so much better than he is, than by him

whose kindness he desires to gain or keep? Even in writing to the world there is less restraint."

But though his letters are filled with those ordinary topics of literary correspondence, a sense of the worthlessness of his own productions, a spirit of invulnerability against the shafts of censure, nevertheless though censure is the tax, according to Swift, which a man pays to the public for being eminent, no one paid that tax with a worse grace than Pope. There are but three ways," (he remarks elsewhere,) "for a man to revenge himself of the censure of the world; to despise it, to return the like, or to endeavour to live so as to avoid it. The first of these is usually pretended, the last is almost impossible—the universal practice is for the second." Pope, forsooth, did practise the second with a vengeance, but to use the expression Johnson applied to another of the *genus irritabile*, he still was "a sapling on the summit of Parnassus, blown about by every wind of criticism."

How severely he suffered from his malady may be inferred from the account Johnson has given of his habits and condition about the middle of his life. "His constitution," he says, "which was originally feeble, became now so debilitated that he stood in perpetual need of female attendance; and so great was his sensibility of cold, that he wore a

kind of fur doublet under a shirt of very coarse warm linen. When he rose he was invested in a bodice made of stiff canvass, being scarcely able to hold himself erect till it way laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. His legs were so slender, that he enlarged their bulk with three pairs of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and he neither went to bed nor rose without help." This extraordinary necessity for artificial warmth was an evident indication of the deficiency of nervous energy: and what could be expected from the prostration of mental and bodily power, the inevitable consequence of such a miserable condition of the system, but irritability of temper, peevishness, and petulance? "It is said," says Dr. James Johnson, "and I believe with justice, that an infant never cries without feeling some pain.

"The same observation might be extended to maturer years, and it might be safely asserted that the temper is never unusually irritable without some moral or physical cause—and much more frequently a physical cause than is suspected. A man's temper may undoubtedly be soured by a train of moral circumstances, but I believe that it is much more frequently rendered irritable by the effects of those moral causes on his corpo-

real organs and functions. The moral cause makes its first impression on the brain, the organ of the mind. The organs of digestion are those disturbed sympathetically and re-act on the brain: and thus the reciprocal action and re-action of the two systems of organs on each other produce a host of effects, moral as well as physical, by which the temper is broken, and the health impaired."

Head-ache was the urgent symptom which Pope constantly complained of, and this he was in the habit of relieving by inhaling the steam of coffee. It is difficult to conceive on what principle this remedy could alleviate his sufferings; but from the manner in which he aggravated them by improper diet, it is very probable that his remedy was no better than his regimen. It appears that, like all dyspeptic men, he was fond of every thing that was not fit for him. "He was too indulgent to his appetite," says his biographer: "he loved meat highly seasoned, and if he sat down to a variety of dishes, he would oppress his stomach by repletion; and though he seemed to be angry when a dram was offered him, he did not forbear to drink it: his friends, who knew the avenues to his heart, pampered him with presents of luxury which he did not suffer to stand neglected. We are told by Dr. King, his contemporary and friend, that his frame of body promised any thing but

long health, but that he certainly hastened his death by feeding much on high seasoned dishes, and drinking spirits."

From the various accounts given of his mode of living, and of the sufferings it entailed on him, it was evident that his appetite was depraved by indigestion; and it is no less obvious, that constitutional debility induced by that deformity, either natural or accidental, under which he laboured from his cradle, had given the predisposition to this disorder. His frequent head-aches, and the sensation of confusion and giddiness after application to study, or excess in diet, those premonitory symptoms of dyspepsia, he appears to have looked upon as his original disease, whereas the stomach was the seat of his disorder, and the affection of the head only spmpathetic with it. Yet it must be admitted, that when literary men are the subjects of this disorder, that it is very often exceedingly difficult to determine whether the head or the stomach is primarily affected; but in whichever of them is its origin, so immediate is the influence of the one on the other, that the treatment is not materially embarrassed by our uncertainty of the primary seat of the disease. It is the nature of parts sympathetically affected to become disordered in their functions, rather than originally diseased: at least it is a considerable period

before any alteration of structure in a symptomatic disorder takes place. The interval between the two results is occupied by a long train of anomalous ills, which are generally denominated nervous. The term is vague and unmeaning enough for all the purposes of nosology. It implies a host of sufferings which sap the strength and sink the spirits of the invalid, and this hydra-headed malady may continue for years an incubus on his happiness, which utterly destroys not health, but renders valetudinarianism a sort of middle state of existence between indisposition and disease. The symptomatic affection of the head only becomes an organic disease, when the long-continued cause has given it such power that the effect acquires the force of the first cause in its influence on an organ previously weakened or predisposed to disease. It is then easily conceived how the simple headache, in the case of Pope, continued for years symptomatic of a disorder of the stomach, aggravated by mental excitement and improper diet; till the disturbance of the functions of the brain ultimately debilitated that organ, and left it no longer able to resist the effects of the constant exercise of the mental faculties. The result of such long-continued disturbance of the cerebral functions, there is generally great reason to apprehend, will be either alteration in the structure, soften-

ing of its substance, or effusion serous or sanguineous.

There is great reason to believe that one of these terminations took place in the case of Pope several years before his death, as it was found to have done in the case of Swift, and more recently in that of Scott. Even when Pope was apparently in the enjoyment of tolerable health, he had evident symptoms of pressure on the brain, or at least of an unequal and imperfect distribution of the blood in that organ. Those symptoms are only noticed by his contemporaries as curious phenomena connected with his habits of life. Spence says he frequently complained of seeing every thing in the room as through a curtain, and on another occasion of seeing false colours on certain objects. At another time, on a sick bed, he asked Dodsley what arm it was that had the appearance of coming out from the wall; and at another period he told Spence, if he had any vanity, he had enough to mortify it a few days before, for he had lost his mind for a whole day. Well might Bolingbroke say, "the greatest hero is nothing under a certain state of the nerves; his mind becomes like a fine ring of bells, jangled and out of tune!"

The debility of his constitution in his latter years rendered his existence burthensome to himself

and others; his irritability increased with his infirmities, and the peevishness of disease was aggravated by the unkindness and unfeeling conduct of the woman who had been his companion and attendant for many years. The frequent expression of his weariness of life hardly deserves the suspicion of affection which Johnson entertained of its sincerity. Surely there must have been no little inherent melancholy in the temperament of a man, who in Johnson's own words, "by no merriment either of others or his own, was ever seen excited to laughter."

For five years previous to his decease he had been afflicted with asthma; his constitution was completely shattered, and at length dropsy, the common attendant on long sufferings and extreme debility, made its appearance. He was for some time delirious, but a day or two before his death he became collected. He was asked whether a Catholic priest should not be called to him: he replied, "I do not think it is essential, but it will be very right, and I thank you for putting me in mind of it." The calm self-possession, the dignity, and the decorum of his reply, well became the last moments of a Christian philosopher; the forms of his religion had no hold on his affections, but that was no reason why its duties should be neglected, or why the feelings of those who believed in the

efficacy of its forms should be outraged. Death at length happily terminated the sufferings of a life which was a long disease, for such was the career of Pope, from his cradle to the tomb, in which he was deposited in his fifty-sixth year.

Whatever were his infirmities, however great their influence on his temper or his conduct, it appears that neither his irascibility, nor his capriciousness, had ever estranged a real friend. His biographer, who has spared none of his failings, has admitted this fact. The cause of his defects was too obvious to those who were familiar with him, to be overlooked; they knew that ill-health had an unfavourable influence on his character, and that knowledge was sufficient to shield his errors from inconsiderate censure, and uncharitable severity.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHNSON.

"THERE are many invisible circumstances," says the author of the Rambler, "which, whether we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences. All the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character which represents him as careful of his health, and negligent of his life."

There are three peculiarities in Johnson's character which every one is aware of, his irascibility, his superstition, and his fear of death; but there are very many acquainted with these singular inconsistencies of so great a mind, who are ignorant, or at least unobservant, of that malady under which he laboured, from manhood to the close of life, the symptoms of which disease are invariably those very moral infirmities of temper and judgment, which were his well known defects.

Few, indeed, are ignorant that he was subject to great depression of spirits, amounting almost to despair, but generally speaking, the precise nature of his disorder, and the extent of its influence over the mental faculties, are very little considered.

There are a train of symptoms belonging to a particular disease described by Cullen, and amongst them it is worth while to consider whether the anomalies that have been alluded to in the character of Johnson are to be discovered. The following are Cullen's terms:

"A disposition to seriousness, sadness, and timidity as to all future events, an apprehension of the worst and most unhappy state of them, and, therefore, often on slight grounds, an apprehension of great evil. Such persons are particularly attentive to the state of their own health, to every the smallest change of feeling in their bodies; and from any unusual sensation, perhaps of the slightest kind, they apprehend great danger and even death itself. In respect to these feelings and fears, there is commonly the most obstinate belief and persuasion." It is needless to say, the disease that is spoken of is hypochondria. Whether Johnson was its victim, or whether the defects in his character were original imperfections and infirmities, natural to his disposition, remains to be shown in the following pages.

We have a few words to say of the nature of hypochondria, which need not alarm the general reader; so little is known of any thing relative to it besides its symptoms, that very little can be said upon the subject. In the first place it may be as well to acknowledge that the seat of the disorder is unknown. Secondly, be the seat where it may, the nature of the morbid action that is going on, we likewise know not: and, thirdly, that it is a disorder little under the influence of medicine, almost all medical authors do admit. These admissions, we apprehend, bring the question to very narrow limits which trench on the boundaries of every literary man's estate: for indeed, the most important points left for consideration are whether men of studious habits are more subject than other men to this disorder; and if more so, whether the moral infirmities of the hypochondriac are entitled to more indulgence than those of an individual who labours under no such depressing ailment.

In proof of the first assertion, we have only to say, that Hippocrates places the seat of the disorder in the liver; Boerhave in the spleen; Hoffman in the stomach; Sydenham in the animal spirits; Broussais in the intestines; and Willis in the brain. In corroboration of the second, we have but to adduce Sydenham, describing it as a disease of debility; Dr. Wilson Phillip, as one of

chronic inflammation; and Dr. James Johnson, (and, perhaps, with the most reason,) as one of morbid sensibility: but, like tastes, there is no accounting for theories.

For the truth of our last proposition, we appeal to general experience, for the confirmation of the opinion, that time and temperance are the two grand remedies of morbid melancholy. The symptoms of hypochrondria are generally preceded by those of indigestion, though not in very many cases accompanied by them, and not unfrequently do those of hypochondria degenerate into one form or other of partial insanity; in short, hypochondria is the middle state between the vapours of dyspepsia and the delusions of monomania. One of the greatest evils of this disorder is the injustice that the invalid is exposed to from the common opinion that it is the weakness of the sufferer, and not the power of the disease, which makes his melancholy "a thing of life apart;" and the neglect of exerting his volition, which enables it to take possession of his spirits, and even of his senses. His well meaning friends see no reason why he should deem himself either sick or sorrowful, when his physician can put his finger on no one part of his frame, and say, 'Here is a disease;' or when the patient himself can point out no real evil in his prospect, and say, 'Here is the

cause of my dejection.' It is vain to tell him his sufferings are imaginary, and must be conquered by his reason, and that the shapes of horror, and the sounds of terror, which haunt and harass him by day and night, are engendered in his brain, and are the effects of a culpable indulgence in gloomy reveries. In his better moments he himself knows that it is so, but in spite of every exertion, those reveries do come upon him; and instead of receding from the gulf they open beneath his feet, he feels like a timid person standing on the verge of a precipice, irresistibly impelled to fling himself from the brink on which he totters. It is worse than useless to reason with him about the absurdity of his conduct—his temper is only irritated: it is cruel to laugh at his delusions, or to try to laugh him out of them—his misery is only increased by ridicule.

It may be very true, that, he exaggerates every feeling; but, as Dr. James Johnson has justly observed, "all his sensations are exaggerated, not by his voluntary act, but by the morbid sensibility of his nerves, which he cannot by any exertion of his mind prevent." Raillery, remonstance, the best of homilies, the gravest of lectures, do not answer here; the argument must be addressed to the disordered mind, through the medium of the stomach. A well regulated regimen, and an aro-

matic aperient may do more to remove the delusion of the hypochondriac, than any thing that can be said, preached, or prescribed to him.

Indigestion is often one of the accompanying symptoms of hypochondria; but, as we have before remarked, it may be often wanting in the severest forms of the disorder, yet there is great reason to regard hypochondria in no other light than that of an aggravated form of dyspepsia. At all events there is no shape of this disease, as Dr. J. Johnson has observed, which is not aggravated by intemperance in diet, and not mitigated by an abstemious regimen. Burton's account of the horrors of hypochondria, is one of the most graphic of all the descriptions of its sufferings. "As the rain," saith Austin, "penetrates the stone, so does this passion of melancholy penetrate the mind. It commonly accompanies men to their graves: physicians may ease, but they cannot cure it; it may lie hid for a time, but it will return again, as violently as ever, on slight occasions as well as on casual excesses. Its humour is like Mercury's weather-beaten statue, which had once been gilt; the surface was clean and uniform, but in the chinks there was still a remnant of gold: and in the purest bodies, if once tainted by hypochondria, there will be some relics of melancholy still left, not so easily to be rooted

out. Seldom does this disease, procure death, except (which is the most grievous calamity of all) when these patients make away with themselves—a thing familiar enough amongst them when they are driven to do violence to themselves to escape from present insufferable pain. They can take no rest in the night, or if they slumber, fearful dreams astonish them, their soul abhorreth all meat, and they are brought to death's door, being bound in misery and in iron. Like Job, they curse their stars, for Job was melancholy to despair, and almost to madness. They are weary of the sun and yet afraid to die, *vivere nolunt et mori nesciunt.* And then, like Esop's fishes, they leap from the frying-pan into the fire, when they hope to be eased by means of physic;—a miserable end to the disease when ultimately left to their fate by a jury of physicians furiously disposed; and there remains no more to such persons, if that heavenly Physician, by his grace and mercy, (whose aid alone avails,) do not heal and help them. One day of such grief as theirs, is as an hundred years: it is a plague of the sense, a convulsion of the soul, an epitome of hell: and if there be a hell upon earth it is to be found in a melancholy man's heart! No bodily torture is like unto it, all other griefs are swallowed up in this great Euripus. I say of the melancholy

man, he is the cream and quintessence of human adversity. All other diseases are trifles to hypochondria; it is the pith and marrow of them all! A melancholy man is the true Prometheus, bound to Caucasus; the true Tityus, whose bowels are still devoured by a vulture."

CHAPTER XVII.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

Our attention was some time ago called to the peculiarities of Johnson's malady, by an attack which we heard made on his failings and infirmities by one of the greatest of our living poets: and one of those literary ephemeræ who flutter round the light of learning.

We heard it asserted that Johnson "was far behind the intelligence of his age; that his mind was so imbued with the legends of the nursery, and the fables of superstition, that his belief extended to the visionary phantoms of both." In short, that he had neither the heavenly armour of religion, which is hope and confidence in the goodness of the Deity—nor the earthly shield of honour, which is freedom of spirit and fearlessness of death.

The minor critic, with supercilious air, spoke of the ferocious powers of the great bear of learning, the unpresentable person of the "respectable Hottentot," who had knocked down his bookseller

with one of his own folios. He inveighed against the coarseness of his manners, the tyranny of his conversation, and the uncouthness of his appearance: had the present been his day, he would hardly be tolerated in good society. An author so ignorant of the "lesser morals" as to be capable of thrusting his fingers into a sugar-basin, of rolling about his huge frame in company, to the great peril of every thing around him, would certainly not be endured westward of Temple Bar; and none but Boswell could be mean enough to put up with his vulgar arrogance.

We listen with patience so long as the bard was disparaging his brother; but when the minnow of literature had the audacity to assail the Triton of erudition, to use an elegant Scotticism—our corruption rose, and though the memory of the Doctor had been reviled no less by the bard than the gentleman just spoken of, we could not help expressing an opinion in an audible voice, that it was something after all to be torn to pieces by a lion, but, to be gnawed to death by a rat, was too loathsome a fate for the worst malefactor.

That an author of the Doctor's outward man and uncompromising manners would cut a very sorry figure in Holland house, is very possible. If Foscolo got into irretrievable disgrace for

standing on a chair in the library to reach a volume, how surely would the Doctor, by some unhappy exploit, some sturdy opinion or unfortunate disposition of his members bring the vengeance of offended patronage, and outraged delicacy, on his head!

Nevertheless, Johnson was not behind the intelligence of his age, though his manners were uncompromising, his energy of character oftentimes offensive, his person ungainly, though his "local habitation" had been even eastward of Temple Bar, and though his "name" has become associated in some minds, with the idea of a recondite savage. There is something in the expression "uncouth appearance" which implies vulgarity, and therefore is it that one like Pope, with a distorted figure, or like Byron with a deformed foot, is less subject to disagreeable observations, than one so "unfashionably made up" as the great lexicographer. The uncouthness of Johnson's appearance, however, was the effect of disease, and arose from no natural imperfection: "his countenance," Boswell tells us, "was naturally well formed, till he unfortunately became afflicted with scrofula, which disfigured his features, and so injured his visual nerves, that he completely lost the sight of one of his eyes." Miss Seward says, that "when at the free school, he

appeared a huge, over-grown, mis-shapen stripling, but still a stupendous stripling, who even at that early life maintained his opinions with sturdy and arrogant fierceness." But the picture is overcharged, and is probably painted in the colours of his subsequent character. At a very early age he was attacked with a nervous disorder which produced twitchings and convulsive motions of the limbs that continued during life, and which have been noticed and ridiculed as eccentric habits, and tricks of gesture, that he had accustomed himself to. Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "these tricks of Dr. Johnson proceeded from a habit which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct." An odd way certainly of reprobating it; but there is no occasion to refer these motions to so mysterious an origin: the cause was unquestionably the disorder of his nervous system. The violence of his temper, and the gloom which overcast his religious feeling throughout his life, were no less evidently the effects of that morbid irritability which ultimately became a fixed and permanent hypochondria. "This malady," says his biographer, "was long lurking in his constitution, and to it may be ascribed many of his

peculiarities in after life; they gathered such strength in his twentieth year as to afflict him dreadfully. Before he quitted Lichfield, he was overwhelmed with his disorder, with perpetual fretfulness, and mental despondency, which made existence miserable. From this malady he never perfectly recovered."

So great was the dejection of his spirits about this period, that he described himself at times as being unable to distinguish the hour upon the town-clock. As he advanced in life this depression increased in intensity, and differed very little from the early symptoms of Cowper's malady: the only difference was in the quality of the minds which the disease had to prey upon; the different powers of resistance of a vigorous and a vacillating intellect. On one occasion Johnson was found by Dr. Adams in a deplorable condition, sighing, groaning, and talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room; and when questioned about his state, declaring "he would consent to have a limb amputated to recover his spirits."

The limits which separate melancholy from madness were brought to so narrow a compass, that had his malady advanced another step, it is lamentable to think that its mastery over the powerful mind of the sufferer would probably have

been permanent and complete. The tortured instrument of reason was wound up to its highest pitch, and nothing was wanting to jangle the concord of its sweet sounds but another impulse of his disorder. His peace was wholly destroyed by doubts and terrors; he speaks of his life as a barren waste of his time, with some disorders of body and disturbance of mind very near to madness. "His melancholy," says Murphy, "was a constitutional malady, derived, perhaps, from his father, who was at times overcast with a gloom that bordered on insanity." When to this is added, that "Johnson, about the age of twenty, drew up a description of his infirmities for Dr. Swinfen, and received an answer to his letter, importing that the symptoms indicated a future privation of reason, who can doubt that an apprehension of the worst calamity that can befall humanity hung over his life, like the sword of the tyrant suspended over his head?"

No one, indeed, can wonder that this terrible prognostic of insanity should cast its shadows before all his future hopes of worldly happiness: the only wonder is, that a physician could be found so ignorant of the moral duties of his calling, or so reckless of the feelings of a melancholy man, as to implant the very notion in his mind which it was his business to endeavour to eradi-

cate if already fixed there; namely, that madness was to be the termination of his disease. Was this doctor simple enough to imagine, that there is any thing in genius which renders the intellect better able to support prospective evil, or the undisguised prognosis of a fearful malady, than the humble faculties of an ordinary mind? Simple indeed he would be to think so, and little acquainted with human nature.

But the error, we well know, is daily committed by the inexperienced, of supposing that literary men are possessed of strength of mind that may enable them to rise superior to the fears and apprehensions of the common invalid, and, consequently, that all reserve is to be laid aside, and the real condition of such patients freely and fearlessly exhibited to their view. This is a great mistake: the most powerful talents are generally united with the acutest sensibility, and in dealing with such cases the considerate physician has to encourage, and not to depress, the invalid: to temper candour with delicacy; and firmness above all things, with gentleness of manner, and even kindness of heart. If it be essential in one disease more than another for the physician to command the confidence of his patient, to engage his respect, and to convince him of the personal

interest that is taken in his health and well-being—that disease is morbid melancholy.

Johnson was wont to tell his friends, that he inherited "a vile melancholy" from his father, which made him "mad all his life—or, at least, not sober." Insanity was the constant terror of his life; the opinion of Dr. Swinfen haunted him like a spirit of evil wherever he went; and at the very period, as Boswell observes, when he was giving the world proofs of no ordinary vigour of understanding, he actually fancied himself insane, or in a state, as nearly as possible, approaching to it.

Johnson's malady and Cowper's were precisely similar in the early period of each, as we have before remarked; the only difference was in the strength of mind of either sufferer. Cowper at once surrendered himself up to the tyranny of his disorder, and took a pleasure in parading the chains of his melancholy before the eyes of his correspondents, even when "immuring himself at home in the infected atmosphere of his own enthusiasm;" while Johnson struggled with his disease, sometimes indeed in a spirit of ferocious independence, and very seldom complained to his most intimate friends of his "humiliating malady." In no point was the vigour of his intellect shown in so strong a light as in this

particular; for in no malady is there so great a disposition to complain of the sufferings that are endured, and to over-state their intensity, lest, by any possibility, they should be under-rated by others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

JOHNSON'S disorder (if we may be allowed the expression) had three phases, the character of each of which distinghished a particular period of his career, or rather predominated at a particular period, for it cannot be said that the hues of each were not occasionally blended. At twenty, however, his despondency was of a religious kind: about forty-five "his melancholy was at its meridian," and then had the shape of a fierce irritability, venting itself in irascibility of temper, and fits of capricious arrogance.

At the full period of "three-score years and ten," the leading symptom of his hypochondria was "the apprehension of death, and every day appeared to aggravate his terrors of the grave." This was "the black dog" that worried him to the last moment. Metastasio, we are told, never permitted the word death to be pronounced in his presence; and Johnson was so agitated by having the subject spoken of in his hearing, that on one

occasion he insulted Boswell for introducing the topic; and in the words of the latter, he had put "his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with comparative safety, but at last had it bitten off."

"For many years before his death," says Arthur Murphy, "so terrible was the prospect of death, that when he was not disposed to enter into the conversation that was going forward, whoever sat near his chair might hear him repeating those lines of Shakspeare—

"To die and go we know not where."

He acknowledged to Boswell he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him; and even at the age of sixty-nine he says he had made no approaches to a state in which he could look upon death without terror.

At seventy-five, we find him writing to his friends to consult all the eminent physicians of their acquaintance of his case. To his kind and excellent physician, Dr. Brocklesby, he writes, "I am loathe to think that I grow worse, but cannot prove to my own partiality that I grow much better. Pray be so kind as to have me in your thoughts, and mention my case to others as you have opportunity." Boswell, at the same time, in Scotland, was employed in consulting the most

eminent physicians of that country for him. In his last illness, when a friend of his told him he was glad to see him looking better, Johnson seized him by the hand, and exclaimed, "You are one of the kindest friends I ever had." It is curious to observe with what sophistry he sometimes endeavoured to persuade himself and others of the salutary nature of his excessive terrors on this head: he tells one friend that it is only the best men who tremble at the thoughts of futurity, because they are the most aware of the purity of that place which they hope to reach. To another, he writes that he never thought confidence with respect to futurity, any part of the character of a brave, a wise, or a good man. His executor, Sir John Hawkins, who lets no opportunity pass to blacken his character, speaks of his fear of death in terms which imply some crime of extraordinary magnitude weighing on his heart; it was with difficulty, he says, he could persuade him to execute a will, apparently as if he feared his doing so would hasten his dissolution. Three or four days before his death, he declared he would give one of his legs for a year more of life. When the Rev. Mr. Sastres called upon him, Johnson stretched forth his hand, and exclaimed in a melancholy tone, "Jam moriturus!" But the ruling passion of his disease was still

strong in death; for at his own suggestion, when his surgeon was making slight incisions in his legs with the idea of relieving his dropsical disorder, Johnson cried out, "Deeper, deeper; I want length of life, and you are afraid of giving me pain, which I do not value."

"On the very last day of his existence," says Murphy, "the desire of life returned with all its former vehemence; he still imagined that by puncturing his legs relief might be obtained. At eight in the morning he tried the experiment, but no water followed." If Johnson's fear of death were not the effect of disease, it would be impossible to contemplate his conduct either in sickness or in sorrow, in his closet or on his death-bed, without feelings of absolute disgust. What other sentiment could be entertained

> "For him who crawls enamoured of decay,
> Clings to his couch, and sickens years away,"

and shudders at the breath of every word which reminds him of the grave? The bravest man that ever lived may not encounter death without fear, nor the best Christian envisage eternity with unconcern; but there is a difference between the feeling of either, and the slavish terrors of a coward in extremity. There is a distinction, moreover, which is still more worthy of observation—the wide distinction between the fear of death that

springs from an inherent baseness of disposition, and that apprehension of it which arises from the depressing influence of a disease. Who can doubt that Johnson's morbid feelings on this point were occasioned by hypochondria? and what medical man, at least, is not aware that the fear of death is as inseparable a companion of hypochondria as preternatural heat is a symptom of fever?

We have now a few observations to make on the subject of Johnson's superstition; and we preface them with an observation of Melancthon, which deserves the attention of all literary men. "Melancholy," (says this amiable man, who had been himself its victim, ("is so frequent and troublesome a disease, that it is necessary for every body to know its accidents, and a dangerous thing to be ignorant of them." One of these "accidents" is to confound the ideas of possible occurrences with those of probable events—a disposition to embody the phantoms of imagination, to clothe visions of enthuthiasm in forms cognizable to the senses, and familiar to the sight; in short, to give to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name."

This disposition was the secret of Rousseau's phantom that scarcely ever quitted him for a day; of Luther's demons, with whom he communed in

the solitude of his study; of Cowper's messenger, bearing the sentence of eternal reprobation; of Tasso's spirits gliding on a sunbeam; of Mozart's "man in black," the harbinger of death, who visited his dwelling a few days before his decease; and of Johnson's belief in the existence of ghosts, and the ministering agency of departed spirits. His sentiments on these subjects, though expressed in a work of fiction, are well known to have been his deliberate opinion. "That the dead are seen no more I will not undertake to maintain against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages and of all nations. There are no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related or believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth."

This is the language of the hypochondriac, not of the moralist, who in the exercise of a sober judgment must have known that the concurrent testimony of all experience and philosophy was opposed to the opinion that those who are once buried are seen again in this world.

There are many of what are called the peculiarities of Johnson's superstition, which excite surprise, but are not generally known to be the characteristic symptoms of hypochondria. "He

had one peculiarity," says Boswell, "of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. This was an anxious care to go out or in at a door, or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, so as that either his right or left foot, I forget which, should constantly make the first actual movement. Thus, upon innumerable occasions I have seen him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with deep earnestness, and when he had neglected, or gone wrong, in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion."——"Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed him go a long way about rather than cross a particular alley." His piety, we are told by Murphy, in some instances bordered on superstition, that he thought it not more strange that there should be evil spirits than evil men; and even that the question of second sight held him in suspense. He was likewise in the habit of imposing on himself voluntary penance for every little defect, going through the day with only one cup of tea without milk, and at other time abstaining from animal food. He appears likewise to have had a superstitious notion of the efficacy of repeating a detached sentence of a

prayer over and over, somewhat in the manner of a Turkish devotee, who limits himself daily to the repetition of a particular verse of the Koran. "His friend, Mr. Davies," says Boswell, "of whom Churchill says, 'that Davies hath a very pretty wife,' when Johnson began his repetition of 'lead us not into temptation,' used to whisper Mrs. Davies, 'you, my dear, are the cause of this.'" Many of these habits, however, if they were weaknesses, were the weaknesses of a pious and a good man, and were the result of early religious impressions, instilled into his mind by his mother "with assiduity," but, in his opinion, "not with judgment." Sunday, he said, was a heavy day to him: when he was a boy he was confined on that day to the perusal of the Whole Duty of Man, from a great part of which he could derive no instruction. "A boy," he says, "should be introduced to such books by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellencies of composition; that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects, may not grow weary." Be this as it may, his superstitious notions and observances were encouraged, if not caused, by his disease.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

The indefatigable Burton has ransacked all medical authorities, ancient and modern, for the symptoms of hypochondria; and amongst those he has enumerated there is not one of Johson's miscalled peculiarities, which is not to be found. "Many of these melancholy men," says Burton, "are sad, and not fearful—some fearful and not sad."—— (Johnson, for instance, groaning in his chamber, as Dr. Adams found him, and at another period knocking down a bookseller in his own shop.) "Some fear death, and yet, in a contrary humour, make away with themselves." (Johnson, indeed, did not commit suicide, but his fear of death was never surpassed.) "Others are troubled with scruples of conscience, distrusting God's mercies, thinking the devil will have them, and making great lamentations." (Similar qualms and apprehensions harassed the doctor to his latest hour.) "One durst not walk alone from home for fear he should swoon or die." (The terror of such an occur-

rence probably contributed to confine the great moralist for so many years to his beloved Fleet Street.) "A second fears all old women as witches, and every black dog or cat he sees he suspecteth to be a devil." (Whether he believed in the witchery of old women or young, we know not, but he was unwilling, however to deny their power, and the black dog that worried him at home was the demon of hypochondria.) "A third dares not go over a bridge, or come near a pool, rock, or steep hill." (Johnson dared not pass a particular alley in Leicester Square.) "The terror of some particular death troubles others—they are troubled in mind as if they had committed a murder." (The constant dread of insanity we have already noticed, and the constructions put on his expressions of remorse by Sir John Hawkins.) "Some look as if they had just come out of the den of Trophonius, and though they laugh many times, and look extraordinary merry yet are they extremely lumpish again in a minute; dull and heavy, *semel et simul*, sad and merry, but most part sad." (The den of Trophonius was his gloomy abode in Bolt Court, whence he sallied forth at night-fall, on his visit to the Mitre, and the gaiety and gloom have a parallel in the state of his spirits when at the university, such as extorted the melancholy denial to Dr. Adams of having been "a gay and frolic-

some fellow" at college—"O, sir, I was mad and violent, but it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic.") "Yet for all this," continues Burton, summing up his account of the "madness of melancholy," in the words of an old author, "in all these things these people may be wise, staid, discreet, and do nothing unbeseeming their dignity, place, or person—this foolish and ridiculous fear excepted, which continually tortures and crucifies their souls."

The habits of Dr. Johnson were most unfavourable to health—he was a late riser, a large eater, indolent and inactive. In the intervals of his disorder he laboured for a time to counteract the effects of these habits, and he so far succeeded in controlling his disease as to be able to divert those distressing thoughts, which it was a folly, he said, to combat with. To think them down, he told Boswell, was impossible, but to acquire the power of managing the mind he looked upon as an art that might be attained in a great degree by experience and exercise. "Upon the first attack of his disorder," says Boswell, "he strove to overcome it by forcible exertion, and frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain; his expression to me was, 'I did not then know how to manage my disorder.'" One of the ways he pro-

posed accomplishing this end was by continually occupying his mind, without fatiguing it, either by day, repeating certain words, in counting a certain number of steps; or at night, when wakefully disturbed, by burning a lamp in his bed-room, taking a book, and thus composing himself to rest. His grand precept was, "if you are idle be not solitary, if you are solitary be not idle." The great secret, however, of this management of mind appears to have been a periodical fit of abstinence, persevered in so long as the violence of any new attack of his malady was upon him. He was far from temperate in the pleasures of the table; he could drink his three bottles of wine, he says, and not be the worse for it; the capacity of his stomach we doubt not, but its invulnerability is very questionable. The doctor, like the "the great child of honour," was a "man of unbounded stomach." Generally speaking, he fed grossly; he even boasted of his veneration for good living, and spoke of "one unmindful of his belly as likely to be unmindful of every thing else." He sometimes talked with contempt of people gratifying their palates. Yet, when at table, Boswell says, "he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks were rivetted to his plate, nor would he hardly speak a word, or pay any attention to what was said by others till he had satisfied his appetite,

which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and the perspiration on his features was visible." Nothing could induce him to go to an evening conversazione, where there were no refreshments. "It will never do, sir: a man does not like to go to a place from which he comes out exactly as he went in." There can be very little doubt but that he aggravated his disorder by improper living, and drank more Port wine than was likely to be of service to a man of sedentary habits—this was his favourite potation. "Bordeaux was a wine," he said, "in which a man might be drowned before it made him drunk; no claret for me, sir—poor stuff—it is the liquor for boys; Port is the drink for men."

At fifty, however, his increasing ailments obliged him to give up wine altogether for near twenty years, but at the age of seventy-two he returned again to the use of it. "Still every thing about his character," says Boswell, "was forcible and violent, there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast, many a day did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously—when he did drink, it was copiously." During the period that he abstained from wine, he betook himself to the use of tea, but he was as intemperate a tea-drinker, as he had been formerly a wine-bibber.

"The quantities," says Boswell, "which he drank of it at all hours was so great, that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong not to have been extremely relaxed by such an immoderate use of it." But, perhaps, one of the most injurious of his habits was the late hours at all periods of his life, that he was in the habit of keeping. Like all hypochondriacs, he was a bad sleeper, and when sleepless he was accustomed, to use his own words, "to read in bed like a Turk"—not one of the doctor's happiest similies: by the way—the Turk neither reads in bed nor out of it. In one of his letters he says, "his life, from his earliest years, was wasted in a morning bed." "He has been often heard to relate, we are told by Murphy, "that he and Savage walked round Grosvenor Square till four in the morning; in the course of their conversation reforming the world, &c. until at length they began to feel the want of refreshment, but could not muster more than four pence halfpenny." There is a trifling inaccvracy in this account; St. James's, and not Grosvenor Square was the scene of their nocturnal ramble. Poor Savage has been unjustly charged with being the cause of all the doctor's disorders, but at the age of forty-three we find him as disposed as ever for a ramble at unseasonable hours. On one occasion Beauclerk and Langton rapped him up at three in the morning, to prevail

on him to accompany them. "The doctor," says Boswell, "made his appearance in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a night-cap, and a poker in his hand, imagining that some ruffians had come to attack him; when he discovered who they were, and what their errand, he smiled with great good humour, and agreed to their proposal. "What! is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you." These habits, and the excesses they led to, were the fuel which fed his hypochondria; his occasional abstinence the damper which every now and then controlled its fury.

On his first arrival in London, abstemiousness was forced upon him by poverty, and in all probability it was his temperance at that critical period of his disorder that enabled him to lay in a stock of bodily vigor, which he might not have otherwise possessed. The man who could style himself Impransus, in his application to a publisher, or who was so reduced as to be arrested for a debt of five pounds for the common necessaries of life, could not have been very luxurious in his living. Yet this was one of the "sweet uses of adversity," he might then have little dreamt of, for the necessary abstemiousness he then practised, gave his constitution time to repair its shattersd energies, and

to invigorate him for a long and arduous campaign in the literary world. Subsequently, when the gloom of his disorder drove him into company to escape from the tyranny of his own sad thoughts, he contracted habits of conviviality, and, to use one of his own grandiloquent terms, of gulosity, which rendered his vigils not only pleasing to the rosy god, but his taste for the good things of the table, a passion which "a whole synod of cooks" could hardly gratify. Poor Boswell complained that he was half killed with his irregularities in the Doctor's company. Port, and late hours with Johnson, had ruined his nerves; but his friend consoled him with the assurance that it was better to be palsied at eighteen, than not keep company with such a man.

Quo ad vinum, Johnson loved his wine probably, better than Burns did his whiskey; our great moralist loved it for its flavour, but the unfortunate bard liked it for its effects. The one flew to it for enjoyment, the other for relief; it was the difference between food and physic, between mirth and madness. The power of abstaining from "the inordinate cup that is unblessed" contrasts the vigor of Johnson's mind with the lamentable weakness of Burns: the one could not abstain for a single day, while the other could give up his wine

for twenty years, although he seemed to think not a little of his deprivation. It was a great deduction, he told Boswell, from the pleasures of life, not to drink wine.

CHAPTER XX.

JOHNSON, CONTINUED.

His health began to break down about fifteen years before his death. "In 1766, his constitution," says Murphy, "seemed to be in a rapid decline, and that morbid melancholy which often clouded his understanding, came upon him with a deeper gloom than ever. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale paid him a visit in this situation, and found him on his knees with a clergyman, beseeching God to continue to him the use of his understanding." From this period to his seventy-third year his fits of melancholy were frequent and severe, though he continued to go into society as before: but lively as his conversation was at all times, his gaiety, he said, was all on the outside. "I may be cracking my jokes, and yet cursing the sun—sun, how I hate thy beams!"

In 1782, he complains of being "afflicted with a very irksome and severe disorder, that his respiration was impeded, and much blood had been taken away." His disorder was asthma: it appears

that he was repeatedly blooded for it, and subsequently the only relief he could obtain was by the daily use of opium to the extent of three or four grains. The propriety of this bleeding, at the age of seventy-three, for a spasmodic malady, which was capable of being relieved by opium, is more than questionable; there can, indeed, be very little doubt that it was fatal to the powers of his constitution, and that the palsy and dropsy which very soon ensued, were the effects of the debility so great a loss of blood occasioned. The diseases of old men whose vital energies have been expended in literary pursuits, are seldom to be remedied by the lancet, and when employed in such cases, it is very often "the little instrument of mighty mischief," which Reid has termed it.—About a year after his first attack of the asthma, during which time he was frequently bled for the disorder, he was seized with paralysis, that malady which literary men, more than any others, have reason to guard against. The vigor of his great mind was manifested on this occasion in communicating the intelligence of his calamity to one of his friends. A few hours only after his attack, while he was deprived of speech, and of the power of moving from his bed, he so far triumphed over his infirmities as to write to Dr. Taylor the following account of his condition. "It has pleased

God, by a paralytic stroke in the night, to deprive me of speech. I am very desirous of Dr. Heberden's assistance, as I think my case is not past remedy. Let me see you as soon as it is possible; bring Dr. Heberden with you, if you can; but come yourself, at all events. I am glad you are so well, when I am so dreadfully attacked. I think that by a speedy application of stimulants, much may be done. I question if a vomit, vigourous and rough, would not rouse the organs of speech to action. As it is too early to send, I will try to recollect what I can that may be suspected to have brought on this dreadful disease. I have been accustomed to bleed frequently for an asthmatic complaint, but have forborne some time by Dr. Pepy's persuasion, who perceived my legs beginning to swell."

How strongly is the powerful intellect of Johnson, (yet unimpaired by his disorder,) shewn in these few emphatic words! The urgency of the case, the necessity for prompt assistance, and the consciousness of the debility that had been brought on his constitution by so much depletion; and yet what extraordinary ignorance of the common principles of medicine is exhibited in the remedial plan he proposes for his relief! The merest Tyro in the medical art would have seen nothing in the administration of the vomit vigorous and rough, but the prospect of aggravated danger, of increas-

ed determination to the head, and even of sudden death, though he might be aware that such a remedy had the sanction of some recent authorities.

The treatment of diseases is not, however, the subject we have to do with; we have only noticed a circumstance which proves how very ignorant of the principles of medicine, and of the nature of a disease which literary men are especially subject to, the most learned persons are frequently found to be.

Johnson survived his attack of paralysis a year and a half, during which time he laboured under a complication of disorders, gout, asthma, and dropsy, which rendered his life miserable, but yet did not prevent him from performing a journey to his native town, and from engaging on his return in his literary pursuits.

Johnson was one of those few fortunate children of genius who have not to complain of the tardy justice of their times: his great merit in his lifetime was universally acknowledged, and public as well as private admiration and gratitude were not limited to the justice that his memory was entitled to, but were displayed in acts of generosity that were calculated to reward the exertions of the living man, and to increase his comforts in sickness and distress. There was no subscription at his death for the purchase of his Bolt-court ten-

ement, to bestow on Mrs. Lucy Porter, of Lichfield, and her descendants—there was no appeal made to the pockets of the public for the erection of a pillar to perpetuate his fame; but the bounty of his sovereign was extended to him in his indigence, and in the hour of sickness the beneficent hand of private friendship and of public benevolence was held forth to him. When there was a question of enabling him to visit Italy for the recovery of his health, Lord Thurlow, we are told, offered five hundred pounds to meet the expenses of his journey; and his amiable physician, Dr. Brocklesby, signified his intention of adding a hundred a-year to his income for life, in order that he might not want the means of giving to the remainder of his days tranquillity and comfort. The conduct of Brocklesby was worthy of the just and elegant compliment which Johnson paid to his profession, in his life of Garth. "I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusions of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art where there is no hope of lucre."

Johnson continued to struggle with his complaints till the latter part of 1784. His earnest and constant prayer, that he might be permitted to deliver up his soul unclouded to God, was granted; he died in his perfect senses, resigned to his situa-

tion, at peace with himself and in charity with all men, in his seventy-fifth year.

The circumstances that we have noticed, connected with the disorder of this great and good man, are amply sufficient to show that the many striking inconsistencies and eccentricities in his character and conduct, were occasioned by disease, or fostered by its influence. His original disorder, it is evident, was a scrofulous affection, which in early life debilitated his constitution, and gave that predisposition to hypochondria which dogged his whole career.

Hahneman, one of the best observers of disease (whatever his character as a pharmaceutical theorist may be) that medical science has to boast of, attributes half the disorders of humanity to a scrofulous or scorbutic taint in the constitution, and that such a taint is calculated to nurture and develope the seeds of an hereditary disease like that of Johnson's hypochondria, there can be little doubt. At all events, if proof were requisite, we trust sufficient has been adduced to show that Johnson's failings were largely influenced by the infirmities of disease, and were foreign to the original complexion of his disposition and the character of his noble nature.

CHAPTER XXI.

BURNS.

Every quarter of a century a revolution takes place in literary taste, the old idols of its worship are displaced for newer effigies, but the ancient altars are only overthrown to be re-established at some future time, and to receive the homage which they forfeited, on account of the fickleness of their votaries, and not in consequence of any demerits of their own.

It is not in the nature of Burns' productions that his fame should altogether set aside the remembrance of his follies; yet so ably and so philosophically has his biographer discharged his duty to the public and to the individual, whose genius he helped to immortalize, and so truly, in the spirit of a philosophical historian, has he traced the infirmities of Burns to their real origin, that were it only for the noble effort to vindicate the character of Genius, Currie's life of Burns would still deserve to be considered one of the best specimens of biography in the English language.

And so long as its excellence had the freshness of a new performance to recommend it to the public, and to lay hold of its attention, the character of Burns was treated with indulgence, and his poetry was duly and justly appreciated.

But of late years there has been a tendency, in literary opinion, to underrate the merits of the Scottish bard, and even to exaggerate the failings of the man. The vulgarity of his errors and his unfortunate predilection for pipes and punch-bowls, it is incumbent on every sober critic to reprobate. Byron, who in his aristocratic mood, had no notion of a poor man "holding the patent of his honours direct from God Almighty," could not tolerate the addiction of a bard to such ungentlemanly habits, and Burns was, therefore, in the eyes of the proud lord, a "strange compound of dirt and deity;" but his lordship, at the time of the observation, was in one of his fits of outrageous abstinence, and to use his own language, "had no more charity than a vinegar cruet."

Bulwer has also lately joined in depreciating the poor exciseman. It is the more to be regretted, as he has the credit of possessing more generosity of literary feelings, and less of the jealousy of genius than most of his compeers.

Burns' fame has certainly declined in the fashionable world; but if it be any consolation to his

spirit, his poetry continues as popular as ever with the poor. Its exquisite pathos has lost nothing of its original charm, but no volume is less the book of the boudoir—the fastidious imagination can hardly associate the idea of poetry with that of an atmosphere that is redolent of tobacco smoke and spirituous liquors.

The frailties of Burns are unfortunately too glaring to admit of palliation; but manifest as they are, much misapprehension we are persuaded prevails as to their character; a dog with a bad name is not in greater peril of a halter, than a poor man's errors are in danger of exciting unmitigated disgust.

In fashionable morality it is one thing to drink the "inordinate cup that is unblessed" of claret or champagne, but quite another to "put an enemy into the mouth to steal away the senses" in the shape of whiskey; similar effects may arise from both, but the odium is not a little in the quality, and not the quantity, of the potation. In the parlance of convivial gentlemen, to have a bout at the Clarendon is to exceed in the pleasures of the table; but to commit the same excess in a country alehouse, is to be in a state of disgusting intoxication. There is no question, however, but that wine is a "more gentlemanly tipple" than any kind of ardent spirits, and that its intoxicating effect is an

"*amabilis insania*" of a milder character than the "*rabia furibunda*" which belongs to the latter. The excesses of the wine-bibber, moreover, are generally few and far between, while those of the dram-drinker are frequent, and infinitely more injurious to mind and body. In this country the poor man is debarred the use of wine; spirits are unfortunately the cheaper stimulant; but were it a matter of choice, he might prefer the former, as well as the French and Italian peasant.

There is one circumstance, however, which deserves consideration in forming any comparative estimate of intemperate habits. Different constitutions are differently effected by the same excitants. Johnson could boast of drinking his three bottles of Port wine with impunity; but the Doctor's was an "*omni vorantia gula.*" Dr. Parr could master two without any inconvenience, but probably had Burns dined with either of them, he would have found the half of a Scotch pint might have caused him in the morning "to have remembered a mass of things, but nought distinctly," and to conclude he had been drinking the "*vinum erroris ab ebriis doctoribus propinatum,*" as St. Austin denominates another inebriating agent. The sin of intemperance is certainly the same whether it be caused by one bottle or three, or

whether the alcohol be concentrated in one form or more largely diluted in another.

In Burns' time intemperance was much more common in his walk of life than it now is. In Pope's day, we find not a few of his most celebrated contemporaries and immediate predecessors addicted to drunkenness. "Cowley's death (Pope says) was occasioned by a mean accident while his great Friend Dean Pratt was on a visit with him at Chertsey. They had been together to see a neighbour of Cowley's, who, (according to the fashion of the times,) made them too welcome. They did not set out on their walk home till it was too late, and had drank so deep, that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off."

Dryden, like Burns, was remarkable for sobriety in early life, "but for the last ten years of his life, (says Denis,) he was much acquainted with Addision, and drank with him even more than he ever used to do, probably so far as to hasten his end." Yet in his case, as Byron's, wine seems to have had no exhilarating influence. Speaking of his melancholy, he says, "Nor wine nor love could make me gay." And Byron speaks of wine making him "savage instead of mirthful."

Parnell, also, (on Pope's authority,) "was a great follower of drams, and strangely open and

scandalous in his debaucheries, (his excesses, however, only commenced after the death of his wife, whom he tenderly loved,) and "those helps," he adds, that sorrow first called in for assistance, habit soon rendered necessary, and he died in his thirty-sixth year, to some measure a martyr to conjugal fidelity, somewhat we presume in the way

> "Of Lord Mount-Coffee-house, the British peer,
> Who died of love with wine last year."

But another account describes Parnell's taking to drunkenness on account of his prospect declining as a preacher at the queen's death, "and so he became a sot, and finished his existence."

Churchill was found drunk on a dung-hill.

Prior, according to Spenser, "used to bury himself for whole days and nights together with a poor mean creature, his celebrated Chloe," who unlike Ronsard's Cassandra, was the bar-maid of the house he frequented. And even Pope, we are told by Dr. King, hastened his end by drinking spirits.

Precedents, however, are no plea for crime, and to multiply them would be useless for any other purpose than to deprecate the infliction of an excessive penalty in a single instance, because the latest though not perhaps the most enormous.

If Burns' irregularity deserved the name of habitual intemperance, it was only during the latter years of his life. Till his three-and-twentieth year, he was remarkable for his sobriety, no less than for the modesty of his behaviour. Had he continued at the plough, in all probability he would have remained a stranger to the vices that his new career unfortunately led him into. It was only, (he tells us,) when he became an author, that he got accustomed to excess, and when his friends made him an exciseman, that his casual indulgence in convivial pleasures acquired the dominion of a settled habit.

In early life he laboured under a disorder of the stomach, accompanied by palpitations of the heart, depression of the spirits, and nervous pains in the head, the nature of which he never appears to have understood, but which evidently arose from dyspepsia. These sufferings, be it remembered, are complained of in his letters, years before he had committed any excess; and so far from being the consequence of intemperance, as they are generally considered to have been, the exhaustion they produced was probably the cause which drove him in his moments of hypochondria, to the excitement of the bottle for a temporary palliation of his symptoms.

No one but a dyspeptic man, who is acquainted with the moral martyrdom of the disease, can un-

derstand the degree of exhaustion to which the mind is reduced, and the insupportable sense of sinking in every organ of the body which drives the sufferer to the use of stimulants of one kind or another. Whether wine, alcohol, ammonia, or the black drop, it is still the want of a remedy, and not the pleasure of the indulgence which sends the hypochondriac to that stimulant for relief.

In one of Burns' letters to Dr. Moore, he mentions being confined by some lingering complaints originating in the stomach, and his constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months he was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who had received their final mittimus. From the period of his first committing "the sin of rhyme," which was a little previous to his sixteenth year, to the age of three-and-twenty, the excitement of the tender passion, which he appears to have felt not unfrequently in the fits of his hypochondria, seem to have had the effect of soothing the dejection, which in later life he employed other means to alleviate.

His biographer has noticed, as a curious fact, that his melancholy was always banished in the presence of women. "In his youth, we are told by his brother Gilbert, he was constantly the

victim of some fair enslaver; but these connexions were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty, from which he never deviated till his twenty-third year. He was only anxious to be in a situation to marry: nor do I recollect, he says, till towards the era of his commencing author, when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company, to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking. No sooner, however, was he led into intemperance than his disorder became aggravated, and his dejection, from being a casual occurrence, became continual.

"The gaiety," says Currie, "of many of Burns' writings, and the lively and even cheerful colouring with which he has portrayed his own character, may lead some persons to suppose that the melancholy which hung over him toward the end of his days was not an original part of his constitution. It is not to be doubted, indeed, that this melancholy acquired a darker hue in the progress of his life; but independent of his own and his brother's testimony, evidence is to be found among his papers that he was subject very early to those depressions of mind which are, perhaps, not wholly separable from the sensibility of genius, but which in him arose to an extraordinary degree."

At the age of twenty-two he writes to his father, "that the weakness of his nerves has so debilitated his mind, that he dare not review past events, nor look forward into futurity, for the least anxiety or perturbation in his head produced most unhappy effects on his whole frame." This was previous to his intemperance.

In 1787 Dugald Stewart occasionally saw him in Ayrshire; "and notwithstanding," says the professor, "the various reports I heard during the preceding winter of Burns' predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety from all of him that ever fell under my own observation: he told me indeed himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effects of his now sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house, after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been disturbed, when in bed, by a palpitation of the heart, which he said was a complaint to which he had of late become subject."

His winter campaign in town had been injurious indeed to his habits, and he was so conscious of the perils he was daily encountering, as to be desirous of fleeing from the scene of temptation.

Having settled with his publisher, Burns found himself master of nearly five hundred pounds, two hundred of which he immediately lent to his brother, who had taken upon himself the support of their aged mother; with the remainder of his money he purchased the farm of Ellisland, on which he determined to settle himself for life. His first act was to legalize his union with the object of his early attachment, which union then imperatively called for a public declaration of marriage.

The natural fickleness of his disposition, however, was soon manifested in his new career; and he had hardly entered upon the peaceful enjoyment of country life before he pined after the distinction of a maiden author's brief reign in literary society. The state of his feelings may be gathered at the time from his common-place book. "This is now the third day that I have been in this country. Lord! what is man? What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas and fancies!—and what a capricious kind of existence he has here! I am such a coward in life—so tired in the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam,

"'Gladly lay me in my mother's lap at ease.'"

"His application to the cares and labours of his farm, (says Currie,) was interrupted by several

visits to his family in Ayrshire, and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed, and in a little time temptation assailed him nearer home. It was not long before he began to view his farm with dislike and despondence."

He now applied to his friends to procure him some appointment, and by the interest of one of them he procured the post of an exciseman, or gauger, in the district in which he lived. It was an unfortunate employment for a man like Burns, and one which threw all the temptations in his path, which a judicious friend might have wished him removed from as far as possible. It must have been a sorry exhibition to have seen the poor poet, his mind probably communing with the skies, scampering over the country in pursuit of some paltry defaulter of the revenue, or travelling from ale-house to ale-house to grant permits, and do the other drudgery of his office: such business is rarely transacted without refreshment, and sometimes the refreshment of man and horse is the only business attended to.

It would have been difficult to have devised a worse occupation for the poor poet, or to have found a man less fitted for its duties than Burns.

After occupying his farm for nearly three years

and a half, he found it necessary to resign it, and depend on the miserable stipend of his office—about fifty pounds a year, and which ultimately rose to seventy.

"Hitherto," says Currie, "though he was addicted to excess in social parties, he had abstained from the habitual use of strong liquors, and his constitution had not suffered any permanent injury from the irregularities of his conduct. But in Dumfries, temptations to the sin that so early beset him threw themselves in his way, and his irregularities grew by degrees into habits." In his own words, "he had dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the lowest of mankind."

From this period poverty, and its attendant ills, were seldom from his door; the irritability of his temper increased, and, as is generally the case, the irregularity of his conduct. He became more reckless and inveterate in his disorders than ever: "He knew his own failings," says Currie, "he predicted their consequence; the melancholy foreboding was never absent from his mind, yet this passion carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course."

"The fatal defect in his character," adds his

biographer, "lay in the comparative weakness of his volition—that superior faculty of the mind which governs the conduct according to the dictates of the understanding, and alone entitles us to be denominated rational."

"The occupations of a poet," he continues, "are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual control, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion, as well as the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately, the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities, to nourish that lofty pride which disdains the littleness of prudence, and the restrictions of order, and, by indulgence, to increase that sensibility which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace and happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune!"

This is worth all that has ever been said on the subject of "the poetic temperament," and no apology, we trust, is needed for the length of the quotation.

The rapid progress of his disorder, both bodily and mental, is exhibited in the desponding tenor of his letters, from the period of his relinquishing his agricultural pursuits. Indolence, the baneful attendant of morbid sensibility, aggravated his hy-

pochondria. Idleness became preferable to a distasteful occupation; and idleness, as usual, was followed by miseries which rendered existence intolerable without excitement. There is no habit gains so imperceptibly on the hypochondriac as that of intemperance. The melancholy man flies to stimulating draughts for a momentary relief, but the remedy must be increased in proportion to the frequency of its repetition; and in proportion as the spirits are exalted by any stimulant the stomach is debilited: in course of time the irritability of the latter organ, extending to the brain, the senses become trembligly alive (if *the expression* may be used) to external impressions; in a word, the sensations are diseased, and this result is morbid sensibility. Burns' biographer has described the progress of this disorder in language which needs not our feeble praise to recommend it.

"As the strength of the body decays the volition fails; in proportion as the sensations are soothed and gratified the sensibility increases; and morbid sensibility is the parent of indolence, because while it impairs the regulating power of the mind, it exaggerates all the obstacles to exertion." And, in the preceding observation, in speaking of morbid sensibility, as being the temperament of general talents, and not of poetry exclusively, as some would have it, he deprecates the indulgence in

indolence, which men of genius are generally prone to, as the immediate occasion of the infelicity of all their tribe. "The unbidden splendors of imagination," he says, "may indeed at times irradiate the gloom which inactivity produces, but such visions, though bright, are transient, and serve to cast the realities of life into deeper shade." Those who would trace the horrors of hypochondria, that symptom, or synonyme of indigestion, aggravated by indolence and intemperance, have only to peruse the letters of Burns; he will find in them the usual incongruous mixture of mirth and melancholy which generally prevails in the conversation and correspondence of dyspeptic men.

In one epistle he figures as the miserable wretch, described by Cicero, "*Ipse suum cor edens Cicero hominum vestigia vitans.*" And perhaps in the next

> "His bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne,
> And all the day an unaccustomed spirit
> Lifts him above the ground with cheerful thoughts."

Hypochondria is the malady in which extreme passions meet. The most ludicrous lines Cowper ever wrote, to use his own words, were written in the saddest mood; and but for that saddest mood, had never perhaps been written at all. Such bursts of vivacity are by no means incompatible with the deepest gloom. In one of his

letters, Burns thus speaks of his dejection: "I have been for some time pining under secret wretchedness; the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, and some wandering stabs of remorse settle on my vitals like vultures, when my attention is not called away by the claims of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner." In another letter he speaks of "his constitution being blasted *ab origine* with a deep incurable taint of melancholy that poisoned his existence."

To Mr. Cunningham he writes, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased; canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tost on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame tremblingly alive to the tortures of suspence, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldest thou disturb me in my miseries with thy inquiries after me?" And to the same correspondent, about a fortnight before his death, he speaks of his sufferings in a sadder strain. "Alas! my friend, the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more! —You would not know me if you saw me—

pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair.—My spirits fled! fled! but I can no more on the subject." He finishes by alluding to the probable reduction in his salary, in consequence of his illness, to five-and-thirty pounds. He entreats his friend to move the commissioners of excise to grant the full salary. "If they do not," he continues, "I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete*. If I die not of disease, I must perish of hunger."

It is needless to extract more. It has been truly said, there is not among all the martyrologies that ever penned so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets." Burns, we are told by his biographer, "though by nature of an athletic form, had in his constitution the peculiarities and delicacies that belong to the temperament of genius. He was liable, from a very early period of life, to that interruption in the process of digestion which arises from deep and anxious thought, and which is sometimes the effect, sometimes the cause, of depression of spirits. Connected with this disorder of the stomach, there was a disposition to head-ache affecting more especially the temples and eye-balls, and frequently accompanied by violent and irregular movements of the heart. Endowed by nature with great sensibility of nerves, Burns was in corporeal, as well as in his mental sys-

tem, liable to inordinate impressions—to fever of body as well as of mind. This predisposition to disease, which strict temperance and diet, regular exercise and sound sleep, might have subdued, habits of a very different nature strengthened and inflamed."

In this brief observation is concentrated all the knowledge that is to be gathered from books on the subject of the literary malady, as indigestion may be pre-eminently called. There is not a word of it which demands not the most serious attention from every individual who is employed in literary pursuits; he may gather from it that excess in wine is not the only intemperance; but that excessive application to studious habits is another kind of intemperance no less injurious to the constitution than the former.

Burns wrestled with his disorder in want and wretchedness till October, 1795; about which time he was seized with his last illness—a rheumatic fever. The fever, it appears, was the effect of cold caught in returning from a tavern benumbed and intoxicated. His appetite from the first attack failed him, his hands shook, and his voice trembled on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and hands, and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much de-

jected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into a uniform gloom. In June he was recommended to go into the country; "and impatient of medical advice," says his biographer, "as well as of every species of control, he determined for himself to try the effects of bathing in the sea." Burns, however, distinctly says in two of his letters, this extraordinary remedy for rheumatism was prescribed by his physician; "The medical men," he wrote to Mr. Cunningham, "tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding."

For the sake of the faculty, I trust that Burns was mistaken in the matter, for no medical man of common sense could think that a patient sinking under rheumatism and shattered in constitution, was a fit subject for so violent a remedy as the cold bath. No medical man can consider, without shuddering, the mischief it must have produced in the case of Burns. At first he imagined that the bathing was of service; the pains in his limbs were relieved, but this was immediately followed by a new attack of fever, as well might have been expected, and when he returned to his own house in Dumfries on the 18th of July he was no longer able to stand upright. At this time a tremor pervaded

his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the 2d and 3rd day the fever increased, and his strength diminished. On the 10th the sufferings of this great but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance.

Thus perished Burns in his thirty-seventh year. Let those who are without follies cast the first stone at his infirmities, and thank their God they are not like the other poor children of genius, frail in health, feeble in resolution, in small matters improvident, and unfortunate in most things.

END OF VOL. I.